

CLERGY WELLNESS AND  
THE CONGREGATION:  
A COVENANTAL  
RELATIONSHIP

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CLERGY WELLNESS AND THE CONGREGATION A COVENENTAL RELATIONSHIP**

by

Jeffery G. Gramza

United Theological Seminary, 2012

J. Elvin Sadler, D.Min.

T. Anthony Spearman, D.Min.

This project openly addressed the physical, spiritual, and emotional health of clergy. Clergy persons currently suffer addictions, hypertension, obesity, depression, suicide, burn-out, etc., at rates higher than the general population. This project addressed the role of congregations in caring for the health of their pastors. The context was St. John Lutheran Church, Celina, Ohio. The project was developed using a six-session course on clergy health for congregation members. The researcher used pre and post surveys, research, and interviews to establish that a course on clergy health enhances the pastor's personal health and relationships with self, spouse, children, congregation members, and church.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many thanks to the many people who were involved in this project:

1. To my mentors, Rev. Dr. J. Elvin Sadler and Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman, thank you for your help, insight, love, and encouragement along this journey. To my peer associates in the Apostolic Leadership cohort group, who have blessed me and enhanced my vision of the church, I give you my thanks.
2. To my professional associates, Rev. Dr. Clark E. Hobby and Rev. Dr. Douglas Meyer, what a great honor it is to call you mentors, colleagues, and friends.
3. To the congregations that nurtured me in my youth and discerned within me a call to ministry: The Swedish Covenant Church in South Bend, IN; Good Shepherd Lutheran in South Bend, IN; and First English Lutheran in Mishawaka, IN.
4. To the congregations that have called me to serve them and tenderly molded me with love into the pastor I am today: St. John Lutheran in Wilson, Texas; Our Savior's Lutheran in Wessington Springs, South Dakota; Holy Trinity Lutheran in New Castle, Indiana; and St. John Lutheran in Celina, Ohio.
5. To the project participants, thank you for sharing your lives with me and allowing this project to help you grow in some way. Your patience and commitment made this project possible. As promised from the beginning of the project, your anonymity has been protected in this project and paper.
6. To my wife Elizabeth, who has lovingly embraced my vision for this project and made the completion of it possible. Thank you for keeping my priorities for God, self, spouse and parent ahead of the needs of our congregation and the church at large. I love you.
7. To my children, Molly, Lillian, Nathaniel, and Grace, who have supported their daddy even when he spent so much time away from them in completion of this project, I thank you for your patience and love. I love you.

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to:

My wife and children,  
**Elizabeth, Molly, Lilly, Nathaniel and Grace**

This project is offered in loving memory of  
dear friends and colleagues in ministry who took their own lives  
in response to the stresses of ministry.

**Rev. William Gruen**  
**Rev. John Malzan**



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

### Books of the Bible

#### Old Testament

Genesis	Gen	Proverbs	Prov
Exodus	Exod	Ecclesiastes	Eccl
Leviticus	Lev	Song of Solomon	Song
Numbers	Num	Isaiah	Isa
Deuteronomy	Deut	Jeremiah	Jer
Joshua	Josh	Lamentations	Lam
Judges	Judg	Ezekiel	Ezek
Ruth	Ruth	Daniel	Dan
1 Samuel	1 Sam	Hosea	Hos
2 Samuel	2 Sam	Joel	Joel
1 Kings	1 Kgs	Amos	Amos
2 Kings	2 Kgs	Obadiah	Obad
1 Chronicles	1 Chr	Jonah	Jon
2 Chronicles	2 Chr	Micah	Mic
Ezra	Ezra	Nahum	Nah
Nehemiah	Neh	Habakkuk	Hab
Esther	Esth	Zephaniah	Zeph
Job	Job	Haggai	Hag
Psalms	Ps	Zechariah	Zech
Malachi	Mal		

#### New Testament

Matthew	Matt	1 Timothy	1 Tim
Mark	Mark	2 Timothy	2 Tim
Luke	Luke	Titus	Titus
John	John	Philemon	Phlm
Acts	Acts	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	2 Peter	2 Pet
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1 John
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2 John

Philippians	Phil	3 John	3 John
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess	Revelation	
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess		

## OPENING PRAYER

This prayer from Ted Loder's book *Guerrillas of Grace*<sup>1</sup> has been my companion, comfort, and challenge throughout the process of this project.

### Pry Me Off Dead Center

Oh persistent God,  
    deliver me from assuming that your mercy is gentle.  
Pressure me that I may grow more human, not through the lessening of my struggles,  
    but through an expansion of them that will undamn me and unbury my gifts.  
Deepen my hurt  
    until I learn to share it and myself openly, and my needs honestly.  
Sharpen my fears  
    until I name them and release the power I have locked in them  
        and they in me.  
Accentuate my confusion  
    until I shed those grandiose expectations  
        that divert me from the small, glad gifts of the now, and here, and the me.  
Expose my shame where it shivers,  
    crouched behind curtains of propriety  
    until I can laugh at last through my common frailties and failures,  
    laugh my way toward becoming whole.  
Deliver me  
    from just going through the motions and wasting everything I have  
    which is today, a chance, a choice, my creativity, your call.  
Oh persistent God,  
    let how much it all matters  
        pry me off dead center  
            so if I am moved inside  
                to tears, or sighs, or screams, or smiles or dreams,  
they will be real  
    and I will be in touch with who I am  
        and who you are  
            and who my sisters and brothers are.

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<sup>1</sup> Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*, 20th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Books, 2005), 96-97.

## INTRODUCTION

This project is about clergy health and well-being. Health is not a static condition but a dynamic state. With respect to one's physical health, one's body is constantly working to maintain balance in function and chemistry. Scientists describe this dynamic state as homeostasis, the drive and capacity of one's body to maintain a steady internal environment, respond to challenges, and adapt to change.<sup>1</sup>

Health and well-being are experienced when one's body is able to maintain its delicate balance. Illness occurs and is felt when the body fails to maintain its balance. When gross imbalance occurs death follows.

This sense of health is a dynamic state of balance that extends beyond the body. Health becomes the balance between oneself and the environment, one's family, one's church, and one's God. When brokenness or imbalance occurs in any of these systems one feels the illness and knows that one is not well. Thus, no one is healthy in isolation. Health occurs as one relates to one's environment, to one's neighbors, and to God.

As Christians seek healing and well-being, according to theologian Martin Israel, their quest begins and ends in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

[Healing] commences on a simple individual plane, extends to involve human society, embraces all other forms of earthly life units, and finally takes in the whole created universe. Its paradigm is the resurrected body of Christ, at once individual to Jesus and yet at the same time communal with all creation, now raised from corruption of death to the incorruption of eternal life. All other

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<sup>1</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 16.

healing is partial and incomplete even if it restores the integrity of a part or organ of the body to efficient function once more.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Project**

This project sought to address a twofold concern within the church. First, the health and well-being of clergy is suffering. This poor health has ramifications that extend beyond the clergy person, to the pastor's family, the pastor's congregation, and the community the pastor serves. The second concern is that congregations have a poor understanding of the covenantal relationship between pastor and congregation that is intrinsic to the pastor/congregation relationship.

The researcher proved that as parishioners learned the biblical significance of covenantal relationships especially as they relate pastor to congregation, those laity sought to live into that covenantal relationship. The laity fully embraced the covenantal relationship God had established with them—that God has, is, and will continue to love, care for and protect them. As God is already doing this for them, they are called to do the same for one another and for their pastor.

### **Clergy Health**

Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) were asked to describe a healthy Lutheran pastor; their descriptions were summarized in the Ministerial Health and Wellness Report 2002:

Healthy pastors are described as having good relationships, including good marriages, supportive spouses and family structures, and good relationships with

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Israel, *Healing as Sacrament: The Sanctification of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1984), 8.

their congregations. They have a passion and a vision for ministry, the ability to handle stress and seek balance in life, the recognition of boundaries both personal and professional, and an ability to manage and be accountable. They are alive spiritually with a significant prayer and devotional life and a Lutheran sense of being called. Healthy pastors have mentors and collegial relationships, pursue lifelong learning, and feel valued. They take vacations and sabbaticals. Finally, they have a good sense of humor.<sup>3</sup>

The bishops' summary reflects a Christian understanding that individuals are unified, whole persons. This Christian perspective on health joins the apostle Paul's that "our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless."<sup>4</sup> In all, this means that in concern for one's health and well-being, one should be attentive to the physical, spiritual, mental, familial, and communal dimensions of one's life.

### **Covenantal Relationships**

<sup>34</sup> When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup> and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" <sup>37</sup> He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>5</sup>

Peter Steinke suggests that couched in this passage is the dynamic nature of well-being and love. "Love is comprehensive. If you love God only with your mind (cognitive) and you do not love God with your heart (devotion, compassion) and your

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<sup>3</sup> Gwen Wagstrom, *Ministerial Health and Wellness 2002* (Minneapolis, MN: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2002), 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 22:34–40.

strength (commitment), your love is incomplete.”<sup>6</sup> Steinke summarizes, the creature’s vocation, giving and enabled by God, is to relate to God as a partner in covenant—“ they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer. 32:38).<sup>7</sup>

Born out of the love of God for humanity, is a command that one love God, that one learns to love one’s self, and that one love one’s neighbor. As God established God's love for humanity as a covenant, God invites/commands humanity into a covenantal relationship with one another. First, that individuals learn to love God with all of their heart mind and soul. Second that they love, respect, and care for the self that God created them to be. Finally, that they love their neighbor.

### **Preview of Chapters**

Chapter One, “Ministry Focus,” includes the researcher’s story, the story of his call to ministry, the congregations that have molded him during his years of ministry, and his current context. It also includes his perception of a crisis in the health of clergy today and a description of the project created to address the crisis.

Chapter Two, “The State of the Art in the Ministry Model,” is a discussion of the prevailing, relevant literature in family systems theory and clergy self-care as these topics relate to the covenantal relationship between pastor and congregation.

Chapter Three, “Theoretical Foundations,” offers theoretical foundations for a covenantal relationship between God and humanity, between neighbor and neighbor, and between a congregation and pastor. This chapter explores the biblical foundations of this

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<sup>6</sup> Steinke, *Healthy Congregations*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), xii.



project, Micah 6:1-8 and Matthew 22:34-40. Walter Brueggeman's insights on covenantal relationships offer a theological foundation within this chapter. Finally, the author explores a historical glimpse of the health and well-being of clergy.

Chapter Four, “Methodology,” provides the researcher’s methodology and proposal for this ministry project. It explores how the outcomes of the project will be measured and analyzed.

Chapter Five, “Field Experience,” documents the journey of this ministry project from start to finish. This chapter includes a brief description of each of the program participants. Finally, the researcher discusses how it was executed, the impact it had on participants in the program, and the outcome of the project.

Chapter Six, “Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion,” contains a summation of the entire process of implementing this project. It includes the author’s reflections on what worked well, what did not work as well, and how the project can be adjusted for future use.

The researcher is confident that this project has had, and will continue to have, a positive outcome—reflected in the pastor's overall well-being and in the congregation’s overall well-being.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

#### **Blessed Beginnings**

Paul writes in his Second Letter to the Corinthians:

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.<sup>2</sup> We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.<sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.<sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.<sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.<sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;<sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;<sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.<sup>11</sup> For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.<sup>12</sup> So death is at work in us, but life in you.

<sup>13</sup> But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak,<sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.<sup>15</sup> Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:1–15.

Rev. Jeffery George Gramza is blessed. God created him, claimed him, and sent him out with the Good News of Jesus Christ. He is, however, an earthen vessel, a clay jar as Paul puts it. Not only a clay jar, he is a broken jar. Only through Christ does he have his being. Through Christ he lives and serves God and God's people. His story is that of a simple man of clay; a man broken by sin and the weight of the world. He is a man nonetheless claimed in the baptismal waters and sent. In the waters of baptism God entered into a covenantal relationship with him and has showered him with blessings all of his life.

He is the first born son to a mother and father who are loving and supportive of their son and loving and faithful to God. The author was joined in the household by a brother and sister, both younger. He grew up in a covenantal household that sat around the dinner table every evening, was in church every Sunday morning, and never lacked for love.

He is married to Elizabeth Anne, his wife of sixteen years. Liz is a registered nurse who does nursing education in a college setting. Together they have four children: Molly, Lilly, Nathaniel George, and Grace.

The author was baptized in the Swedish Covenant Church of his maternal family. His mother and father moved the family to a Lutheran church while he was still a young boy. It was at that church, under the supervision of a loving congregation and caring pastors that the author's faith developed and his calling to the ministry took root. As a youth member of the congregation, he assisted with worship, sang in the choir, sang solos, and played the trumpet.

Using various people in the author's life, God continued to call him to the ministry during his high school and college years. His childhood congregation, his pastors, his high school peers, his college professors, and his bishop, all helped him discern a call to the ministry. All of these people encouraged the author to follow God's plan for his life and become a pastor.

It was Holy Week 1993 when the author surrendered his life to the Lord. This was not a conversion to Christianity. This was a surrender to God's will for his life. He was finished wrestling with God over the pathway of his life. He was ready to accept the call to ministry that had been so clear in his life.

In that moment of surrender, the world seemed right, confusion cleared, and the author was never so sure of anything. He made a deal with God that day. He told God he was ready but unequipped. He promised God he would give his best to be a pastor, only if God would stay with him and give him the strength, the faith, the words and the wisdom to do God's work. Within this covenantal relationship, the author has endeavored to keep his side of the deal and God has been faithful to God's. One of the many joys he has discovered through his years of ministry is that the more he trusts and relies on God, the better ministry goes.

### **The Covenantal Relationship Tested**

The author began seminary in the summer of 1993 at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. After his second academic year, ministry and the challenges of ministry became real. He was accepted into a special Clinical Pastoral Education program at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis under the supervision of Urias Beverly. This was an

experimental intensive program. Students in this special four-week intensive program worked eighteen hours a day, six days a week, with one night of call per week. The program director described himself as a simple street preacher, but he was anything but that. He was the president of the national Clinical Pastoral Education program. His students joked that not only did Urias know the issues they were dealing with in the moment, he was also aware of the issues they would be struggling with tomorrow.

It was the middle of the night when the author's pager went off. He called Urias who was still in the chaplain's office; Urias summoned him immediately. A young, thirty-year-old father had just died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack. His wife, two daughters, and mother were at the bedside waiting for the chaplain. It was an awesome adrenaline rush for the chaplaincy student. This was certainly tragic, but he would be able to witness one of the best hospital chaplains in the country in action. To his horror, Urias said "Go!" The student protested; arguing that he lacked the requisite pastoral skills, words, and courage. "Pray for yourself and the family all the way there," Urias told him. "Trust God to give you the words," he said. "When you are finished come back and we will talk about it," he said. This was it. This was the ministry for which this author was ill-equipped. He reminded God of their promise to one another, the covenantal relationship they established earlier, and he trusted that promise as he shared the Gospel with that family.

Today, the author counts this as one of the most enlightening events of his ministry. God has called him into what he considers to be the impossible vocation of ministry. God has established with him a covenantal relationship, whereby God provides the skills and insights necessary for ministry if he remains a vessel open to the guidance

of the Holy Spirit. In this single event, in a hospital room, in the middle of the night, he opened himself to the power and guidance of God, and God did not disappoint him.

### **Parish Ministry**

In his third year of seminary, the author served a one-year internship at St. John Lutheran Church in Wilson, Texas. St. John is a small, very rural congregation in West Texas. This Texas congregation was in a healing process. Their last called pastor had significantly betrayed their trust. They needed a pastor who would love them and shepherd them. In return, they promised to love and support their pastor. For the author and his family, it was their first foray into rural life and rural ministry. The unhurried pace and simple living of the country was a blessing.

Following seminary, the author was ordained a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He accepted his first call as an ordained pastor to serve Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Wessington Springs, South Dakota. Again, the Lord called him and his family to rural ministry. Wessington Springs is a small, rural community in central South Dakota. Here again, the congregation sought a pastor who would openly love them and faithfully shepherd them in their pilgrimages through life. In return, they showed nothing but love and support for their pastor and his family. For this young ministry family, life and ministry in South Dakota was idyllic; unfortunately, as the family was growing, the pain of separation from the extended family was also growing. The Lord was calling them back home to Indiana.

The author's family then moved back to their home state of Indiana, where they were called to serve Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in New Castle, Indiana. New Castle is

a small blue-collar industrial city in central Indiana. The author and his family served this congregation for ten years. Ministry at Holy Trinity in New Castle was very different from what the author had previously experienced.

Here the congregation as a whole had a poor sense of a pastor's "call" to ministry. The congregation was thankful for the pastor's ministry, but not nearly as supportive and loving as previous congregations had been. The author was treated more like a hired staff person paid to do a job, than a pastor called to do ministry. Since the late 1960s in this congregation's history, every pastor has been forced to resign, with the exceptions of one who retired and the author.

### **Conflict Consultant**

The author has also worked as a consultant for congregations in the areas of conflict management and congregational health. He worked formally and informally with judicatory staff, pastors, church boards and congregations. Within this work he became privy to the underlying foundational systems that bring about illness in a congregation and health in a congregation. He has had the opportunity to closely study relationships between congregations and their pastors.

As the author began ministry in South Dakota, he was invited into the life of a pastor who was struggling because of a poor relationship with his congregation. He asked the author to coach him in areas of self-care, boundaries, and congregational leadership. Also during this time the author was invited to work with a three-point parish that was heavily conflicted. When the Bishop of South Dakota heard of his work, she arranged for formal training in the area of congregational health and congregational conflict

management. The author was trained by Peter Steinke, an expert consultant, trainer, and writer in the areas of congregational health, systems dynamics, and conflict management. Steinke trained him and certified him as a facilitator trainer in the national Healthy Congregations program and certified him as a consultant in the national Bridge Builder congregational conflict management program.

The author loves this work for two reasons. First, he loves conflict work because it keeps him grounded. When he works with a congregational system, one of his first major undertakings is data gathering. He studies the demographic trends of the congregation and the community. He studies financial records. He looks for nodal events in the life of the congregation. He interviews the congregation, staff, and pastor. In a typical congregation he may interview fifty percent of the membership. In a congregation in crisis, most of the interviewees will focus their comments on the failures and weaknesses of the pastor. Listening to what people expect of their pastor and listening to people cry out about their unmet pastoral needs, his ears perk. He becomes immediately self-aware of his own shortcomings and probable failures in his own ministry. He always goes away from data gathering learning more about himself.

The second reason he loves conflict management is because it gives him an opportunity to experience the resurrection reality of the Gospel—to witness it firsthand. When he begins his work with a congregation he tells the members that they will hold hands, enter the baptismal waters, and drown/die to their old selves and old ways. He tells them that through Christ's help they will emerge on the other side of this conflict a new creation. He explains that his role as consultant is to ensure they do not waste their suffering, but use it to propel themselves into health.



Doing conflict management is difficult and time consuming. Going in to work with a congregation he is aware that for a time many in the congregation will direct anger at him as he seeks to challenge their congregational system. The reason he continues to do the work is the resurrection and new creation on the other side of the conflict work. To see smiles, to experience joyful worship, and to witness a congregation shift from an inward facing dying/defensive stance to an outward facing stance of outreach, mission, and life makes it all worthwhile for him.

### **The Pastor is Sent**

God has claimed this author in the waters of baptism. God equipped him for ministry and continues to supply his needs for ministry. God sends him out to proclaim the Good News in word and deed. He goes, however, with the full understanding that he is a broken pot, a sinner saved by grace.

Ministry in the world today has its foundation in the incarnational love of God. God so loved the world that God sent the Son to take on flesh and blood, to be the physical body of God, to act out the love of God on earth, especially through the cross. Theologically this is what ministry is all about for the author. He seeks to embody incarnational love in his ministry—real hands, real feet—a real presence doing real work. He is a real person, a broken earthen vessel. Christ meets him in his brokenness, offering not only life but also a vocation. He is sent to the broken clay vessels of this world with a Word of healing and life.

### **Context for Ministry**

The setting for this research project is rural northwest Ohio. The context for the author's ministry is St. John Lutheran Church in Celina, Ohio. Celina is a rural small town of approximately 10,000 residents. The primary industry of the community is farming and industrial manufacturing. The community is about 99 percent Caucasian, with a very strong Roman Catholic and Lutheran presence. St. John Lutheran is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The ELCA is the largest Lutheran body in the United States with over 10,000 congregations and 4.2 million members. The ELCA has almost 18,000 ordained clergy.

St. John Lutheran Church in Celina was started in 1870. Its first resident pastor was called in 1894. The church is currently in its third edifice; a large physical structure situated on twenty-seven acres. Currently the congregation has a worship average of approximately 400, with about 150 engaged in weekly catechesis. The author currently serves as senior and solo pastor of the congregation with three full-time staff and a congregation very engaged in the ministry of the church.

Approximately twenty-two years ago, this congregation called a very beloved and extremely competent man of God to be their pastor. Years earlier he has served them as an intern during his seminary education. He had married a woman from the congregation who had been a lifelong member of the congregation. After his call he served the congregation faithfully for nineteen years until his family forced him to retire. The congregation loved him and wanted him to do everything and be a part of everything. To his detriment he joyfully accepted every request for help and attention. This pastor's brother was also a faithful pastor and under the weight of ministry he committed suicide.

After the suicide, the family intervened and called for their patriarch to retire early. This became a wake-up call to the congregation that they had been slowly and subtly abusing their pastor.

Approximately two years prior to the arrival of the author; a pastor was called to serve as interim pastor until the search committee found the new resident senior pastor. The interim called was gifted and revered. Only two months into his ministry at St. John this interim was diagnosed with a debilitating and eventually fatal cancer. In this context the roles of principle caregiver were reversed. The pastor remained the spiritual leader of the congregation but the congregation faithfully cared for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the pastor. The congregation was transformed as they ministered to their pastor and their pastor was transformed as the congregation ministered to him. This nodal event in the life of the congregation opened the eyes of the congregation to the needs of a pastor and the ways the congregation can minister to their pastor even as the pastor ministers to the congregation.

Approximately six years ago the congregation shifted to an equipping vision for ministry. In this style of ministry, all members of the congregation are challenged to consider how God has uniquely gifted them for ministry. Members are trained and equipped to do that ministry and then are sent to do that ministry. During any given month, approximately two hundred members are doing ministry inside and outside the church.

### **The Crisis**

The author is blessed to have served as an ordained Lutheran pastor since 1998. In those years he has witnessed approximately 30 percent of those in his seminary

graduating class leave the ministry, and one who committed suicide. Some left because of other career opportunities, but most left because of the stresses of ministry. In his work as a conflict consultant he witnesses firsthand the unhealthy relationships between pastors and congregations. He is aware of the inappropriate expectations congregations have for their pastors. Sadly, he also sees the poor physical, emotional, and spiritual health of many pastors.

Sound health is vital to people's well-being as laity and as pastors. It is vital to relationships and gives people the ability to live out their God given vocations. As created persons, people are finite, vulnerable, and limited. Despite this stark reality, people, even pastors, deny vulnerability to sickness, injury, and death. For a myriad of reasons, pastors too often take a stance of defiant independence, often afraid that a confession of weakness or illness would result in distancing with a congregation. The result is pastors who quietly become disillusioned in their call and burned out on ministry and life.

### **Covenantal Relationships**

Ministry is all about covenantal relationships. God calls pastors into ordained ministry and a covenantal relationship is formed. God covenants with the pastor to provide aid, strength, and guidance for the individual to serve in the vocation into which the pastor is called. The pastor covenants with God to be open, not relying on one's own strength and abilities, but to turn to God for guidance and strength. A covenantal relationship also exists between the pastor and the congregation. The congregation calls the ordained pastor into a unique leadership role in the congregation. The pastor is called

to cast the vision, to proclaim God's word, to administer the sacraments, to visit the sick and imprisoned and to minister to the dying. The congregation, however, also has a responsibility in this covenantal relationship. The congregation must be attentive to the physical, emotional and spiritual burdens that naturally come with the office of pastor. The congregation must provide safe boundaries for their pastor and provide for the maintenance of these boundaries. The congregation must provide adequate financial resources for the pastor. Finally, the members of the congregation must care for the pastor's needs as they expect their pastor to care for their needs.

### **The Project**

The author's project was to work with the congregation's mutual ministry committee<sup>2</sup> made up of six individuals. The author used a simple survey to study the committee members' understanding of the role of pastor, the special stresses of the office of pastor, and the covenantal relationship between pastor and congregation. Six instructional sessions occurred with special focuses on: covenantal relationships, family systems theory, the role of the mutual ministry committee, appropriate covenantal expectations of pastor toward the congregation, appropriate covenantal expectations of congregation toward a pastor, a pastor's needs, and practical ways to provide pastoral support. The program participants then received a posttest identical to the pretest. The ultimate goal of the program was for the new understandings of the mutual ministry committee members to intentionally percolate down through the whole congregation; so

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<sup>2</sup> Within the author's own denomination of the ELCA, congregations are required by their own constitutions to maintain a mutual ministry committee. While this is the expectation and constitutional requirement, the author's own experience is that less than half of Lutheran congregations have such committees.

that the pastor will clearly understand the role of pastor in the congregation, the congregation will clearly understand its role, and both will understand the covenantal relationship that holds them together. This will result in both will be healthier.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE STATE OF THE ART IN CLERGY CARE**

The purpose of this project on clergy wellness was to develop a curriculum that would assist congregational lay members in understanding the following: the special relationship between a pastor and his or her congregation; the unique emotional, spiritual and physical needs of a pastor; and ways of helping the pastor meet those needs in order that the pastor may be healthier as a person and better serve the congregation. Additionally, the author sought to create an educational tool that could be replicated in various settings of other congregations.

In our rapidly changing, technology driven, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, post-Christian era, the role of pastor is a daunting one. As a result, pastors can easily become sick—struggling in the body, mind, and spirit. This poor health begins or perpetuates an out-of-control cycle of illness and brokenness that encompasses the minister, the clergy family, the congregation, the wider church, and society. In the midst of the pastor's own poor well-being, congregational members struggling with their own pain still seek out relief and healing from Christ through their pastor.

No other profession subjects individuals to such a wide range of expectations and unconscious projections. Consider all the births, deaths, baptisms, weddings, conflicts, hospitalizations, and family crises that accrue to any given family. Multiply these by the number of families in a given parish. Now add in the personality style, illnesses, marriage and family stresses of the minister's own life and family. You'll find that this sum equals the enormous demands of ministry

that leave clergy vulnerable to a variety of “viruses” that attack the sense of pastoral call.<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, people tend to see pastors like ancient holy men—individuals who historically sought out suffering and pain that they might be so well-acquainted with it they would be able to guide others through it. Perhaps people look upon their clergy and think about the proverb Jesus shares in Luke 4:23 “Physician heal thyself.” This proverb is based on the simple idea that if a physician is able to heal, the physician should be able to prove that ability by healing the self first. The same appeal was addressed to Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:40, 42).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps parishioners imagine pastors as holy men and women with special connections to God, special tricks and abilities to maintain their own health. In truth, pastors are regular folk, called and gifted by God for a ministry of Word and sacrament. Pastors are subject to the same pains, illnesses and anxieties as everyone else.

This project was built upon the premise that God loves God’s children. In response, God’s children are invited into a covenantal relationship of mutual love for one another that reflects God’s love as shown through the Son. The author began with a supposition that the congregational members do not fully understand the needs of their pastor and because the members of the congregation do not understand the needs of their pastor, they cannot be attentive to those needs. If, however, congregational members do understand the unique needs of their pastor, then based on a covenant of love, they will be attentive to those needs. As the congregation is attentive to the needs of their pastor,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Stephen Muse, *Beside Still Waters: Resources for Shepherds in the Market Place* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), v.

<sup>2</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, (NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1887), Luke 4:23.



the congregation can enhance the pastor's personal health and relationships with self, spouse, children, congregational members, and the church.

The author sought to increase congregational awareness by working with the congregation's mutual ministry committee. Ultimately the goal of the project was a healthier relationship between pastor and congregation, a healthier pastor, and a healthier congregation.

In canvassing literature and research cogent to this project, this researcher was deeply saddened. When one seeks out research on the care of the congregation by the pastor, there is an unfathomable supply of resources pertaining to every possible need of every congregation member. Research, articles, books, curriculums, etc., are aimed at helping the pastor identify the needs of parishioners and satisfying those needs. Social desires, physical needs, intimacy issues, financial predicaments, political quandaries, psychological struggles, spiritual quests, and emotional dilemmas, whatever the problem is, there is a book on it and an algorithm or two for helping the pastor solve it. To the researcher's dismay, when the direction of inquiry is reversed the results are not the same. There are preciously few to no resources for congregational members to understand and care for the needs of their pastor.

In the area of clergy care and clergy wellness, the work done and the resources available focus on clergy self-care. Perhaps clergy themselves have embraced the proverb Jesus quotes in Luke: "Physician heal thyself." To be fair, this researcher did find a few assorted academic articles related to the care of clergy by professional practitioners such as psychologists and licensed counselors. This author found nothing written with congregation members as the intended audience in order that they may offer pastoral care

to their pastor. The vast majority of material on clergy care was written by clergy, with clergy as the intended audience, so that the clergy may care for themselves.

In this author's work it has been instructional to study and do research in the areas of family systems theory and clergy self-care, in order to create within this project, a tool for ministry and pastoral care to the pastor by the people of God.

### **REVIEW OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**

Someone once said, "Pastoring is like being a stray dog at a whistler's convention."<sup>3</sup> Ministers would go crazy answering every whistle. Each clergy person must first understand and be able to describe who he or she is and what his or her goals and directions for ministry are.

Murray Bowen, professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University began developing his theory of family relationships in the 1950s. One of his students, Rabbi Edwin Friedman, continued his mentor's work and applied it to pastoral functioning. In particular, he developed theory around how the pastor functions within his or her family and then within his or her congregational family.

In some ways, family systems theory is moving in the opposite direction of science. In general, science is seeking greater understanding by breaking larger units down into smaller and smaller pieces. For example, researchers are attempting to understand one's inclination to a particular cancer by understanding one's genetic make-up. Family systems theory shifts the thinking back to a more biblical perspective of understanding the smaller parts in relation to the larger part or whole. For example, one

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur P. Boers, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1999), 92.

comes to understand the self by gaining greater understanding of one's family of origin. For Rabbi Friedman, as for the writers of the Hebrew Testament, the family was the primary focus of consideration. The Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians evokes the same awareness when he describes how people individually make up the body of Christ alive in the world today.

Also, unlike the traditional scientific concept of cause and effect, systems thinking understands individuals to be interdependent, one toward another, and as having an effect from within the system (family), while also having a particular affect upon each individual on the basis of his position in the system. Each participant operates as part of a greater whole.<sup>4</sup> For example, the author is the first born of three siblings in a nuclear family of mother, father, and three children. If one brother strikes another in a dispute over a toy, the theory calls for honesty in understanding that the siblings and the event do not represent an isolated event between two individuals where one or the other is at complete fault. In systems thinking everything is co-causal. Both brothers share some responsibility for the altercation. Parents, too, are co-causal as they may have used corporal punishment on the children in the past or they may have engendered a greater sense of entitlement in one brother over the other. Overall, the entire family system is affected by the fraternal altercation; both brothers, mom, dad, and the sister all are affected in some way by the brotherly fight. The theory then goes even further in inviting conversation and observation on how the family squabble is played out by mom and dad at work and the children at school.

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<sup>4</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (NY: Guilford Press, 1985).

Family systems theory can be a source of optimism for congregational pastors. The theory describes how one functions normally in a healthy relationship. It describes how personal growth and maturity comes through a better understanding of one's self in relationship to the systems of which one is a part. The theory postulates and urges that to bring change to any system, whether that system is a family or church congregation, the change begins with the self. Change one's own functioning within a system and the system will change. The theory is about being better connected to others while maintaining one's own boundaries and staying in touch with oneself.

From the perspective of family systems theory, clergy and laity alike need to understand that pastors are not like other members of the church. Pastors guide and cast the vision for the church, but they are not the church. The church belongs to God. Clergy are called by God and through the people of God to serve the church. Pastors, as unique members of and servants to the church, must be aware of the dynamic relationships between congregational members, between laity and the pastor, between the pastor and the pastor's spouse, between the pastor's spouse and the congregation, between the pastor's children and the pastor, between the pastor's children and the congregation, etc. In the end, the theory teaches that the pastor has the potential for healthy change in any of these systems when the pastor changes his or her self.

Rather than asking the question, "How can I change the church?" Bowen Family Systems Theory suggests that the minister should ask, "What do I need to work on to improve my functioning within the emotional system of the church so that I can better represent the Gospel?" If members of the clergy successfully begin to address this question, the theory suggests that amazing things can begin to happen in the congregational context. A focus on the church as an emotional system and

on self-definition is a form of pastoral care in which every member will profit and do better, and ministers will be better, wiser, and healthier leaders.<sup>5</sup>

An instructive anecdote from family systems theory comes from the work of Robert Sapolsky, a primatologist who has studied baboon tribes in Kenya. One of his books, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*,<sup>6</sup> examines stress responses in baboons. Sapolsky uses baboons because their endocrine system is very comparable to that of humans. He lifts up many parallels between the life of a baboon in a baboon tribe and the functioning of individuals in human relationships. For example:

Being the alpha male, the leader of the baboon pack has many rewards such as getting the most food and having sexual access to the females of the tribe. It is a highly desired position and there is never any want of secondary males and older adolescents trying to usurp the alpha's position from time to time. Once some sign of weakness in the alpha has been observed, due to general aging or illness or injury, triangular groups of challengers will confront him. Sometimes, the females will participate in the process. If they manage to depose the alpha, then a period of chaos ensues while there is a struggle between the various challengers for who will be the new alpha male and reap the rewards of the position. The formerly cooperative challengers become competitive with each other but, eventually, a new leader of the pack emerges.<sup>7</sup>

Ronald Richardson, a researcher and writer in the field of family systems theory suggests that many pastors get themselves into trouble when they seek to be the alpha. As pastors they successfully win the position of alpha as they over function to care for all the needs of all the parishioners and squelch the intents of rebellious challengers seeking to lead the church. Once they successfully gain the status of alpha, the congregation

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor* 102, no. 3 (2005): 401.

<sup>6</sup> Robert M. Sapolsky, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: An Updated Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Diseases, and Coping* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 183.

becomes overly dependent upon them and they must continue to over function to maintain their position. Because the over-functioning inherently means that the pastor attends to others' needs while they ignore their own needs, the ministry is not sustainable. In the end there is typically conflict with indigenous (e.g., charter members) leaders of the church and the pastor leaves.<sup>8</sup>

Also edifying in the field of systems theory is the work of Peter Steinke. Steinke was a student of Bowen and Friedmann. Steinke's work is heavily focused on systems theory, but has expanded through his personal work with congregations and through current scientific research in brain biology. Steinke merges system theory of why people behave as they do because of relationships with why people behave as they do because of their brain functioning.

Steinke is a prolific writer, consultant, and speaker in areas of systems theory, congregational health, and conflict management. Some of his most important works include: *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*,<sup>9</sup> *How Your Church Family Works*,<sup>10</sup> *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*,<sup>11</sup> *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope*.<sup>12</sup> Steinke may be best known in mainline churches for

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<sup>8</sup> Richardson: 401.

<sup>9</sup> Steinke, *Healthy Congregations*.

<sup>10</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*.

<sup>12</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *A Door Set Open: Grounding Change in Mission and Hope* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010).

authoring *Healthy Congregations*,<sup>13</sup> a series of six workshops on: creating healthy congregations, responding to anxiety and change in the church; leadership; relationships; generosity; and spiritual life. While *Healthy Congregations* is now a privately incorporated entity, using the aforementioned educational series to further congregational health, Steinke remains active as a consultant and trainer in the body.

### REVIEW OF CLERGY SELF-CARE LITERATURE

“And the second commandment is like the first; you shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.”<sup>14</sup>

For pastors there is a drive, a passion, and a sense of responsibility for embracing these words from our Savior. To their own detriment, pastors tend to focus on one part of this passage while neglecting the other. Pastors so easily love and focus on the neighbor (congregation member) that they neglect and fail to love the self. As a culture, we have become so unhealthy that the notion of loving the self is often interpreted as self-centered or selfish.

Unfortunately this one-sided, other-focused perspective is neither biblical nor healthy. It is not selfish or self-centered to put one's essential needs first. In fact, it is good stewardship of the self and good stewardship of God's creation that one cares for one's own needs first in order to better care for the needs of another. Care for one's self is a necessary concern for all God's children. People of faith must claim self-care as a right and obligation for the health and well-being of themselves, and their relationships with other people and all of God's created order.

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<sup>13</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations* (Columbus, OH: Healthy Congregations, Inc, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 22:39

Self-care begins with embracing the unique self God created. Self-care is accepting that in God's eyes one is so loved that the child of God is worth dying for. Self-care is about remembering one's baptism: God's claim on one's life, God's promise of forgiveness, and God's love for the person one really is. At the cross God reminds each person that they are already loved. God never says, "Save yourself and you will be worthy of my love." God never says, "Heal your own brokenness and you will be worthy of my love." At the cross and in the baptismal waters God reaches out through the Son and says, "I love you." Self-care is about embracing that love and loving the self so that one can reach out and love one's neighbor.

To be honest, there are a lot of people in this world—many of them clergy—whom we would probably prefer did NOT treat us with the same neglect and disrespect that they treat themselves! . . . They've neglected themselves, sacrificed themselves, or played the passive recipient of another's abuse, simply because they believed that's what their faith told them to do. They feel guilty for even thinking of themselves or wanting their own needs met. Saddled with a host of "should," they slide all too easily from healthy self-denial into unhealthy self-neglect.<sup>15</sup>

In the above text from Matthew, Jesus endeavors to clarify something about health when he links love of self to the love of neighbor. One cannot give away what one does not already possess. If one does not accept love from God, how can one offer love from God? If one does not accept forgiveness from God, how can one offer forgiveness from God? If one's personal prayer relationship with the Creator is not healthy, how can one attempt to be a prayer intercessor on another's behalf? If one is feeling burned out, exhausted or frustrated then how can one be a neighbor to someone in need?

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<sup>15</sup> John Arey, "Clergy Self-Care," *Kardiagram* 1, no. 2 (2007): 3.



For this author, maintaining a healthy relationship between God and the self is absolutely essential to self-care. However, the “slippery-slope” trap of self-care is that it is all about the self. Namely the focus can easily become entirely about what the self can do to control one’s own future. Rather than depending on one’s own strength and wisdom, Christians are taught in Scripture to admit one’s total inability to run one’s own life; to surrender every aspect of that life to the Heavenly Father, seeking God’s presence, and asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **Contemporary Work in Clergy Self-Care**

In the genre of clergy self-care, Roy Oswald’s work is the foundation upon which other authors build.<sup>16,17</sup> Oswald begins with the fact that accepting a call to ministry means surrendering one’s self and saying “yes.” Of course this yes is to God. The struggle for many members of the clergy is that as they were unable to say no to God they remain unable to say no within the context of their ministry, even when sometimes the healthiest answer for themselves, their parishioners, and the church is “no.”

Oswald offers a very open and honest treatment of clergy stress and potential burnout. He discusses the unique stresses of ministry and how overwhelmed and unhealthy pastors may more easily cross sacred boundaries (e.g., sexual recklessness).

Oswald’s work also touches on how clergy self-care is reflected in the effectiveness of the pastor’s ministry. For example, if two pastors deliver the same

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<sup>16</sup> Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Roy M. Oswald, *How to Build a Support System for Your Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1991).

sermon, one being physically fit and the other being overweight, which would the congregation be more inclined toward? Would a parishioner seeking guidance in life prefer to consult a pastor whose life appears out of control or a pastor whose life seems well managed? If two pastors are interviewing for the same congregation, the one who is the most physically, emotionally, and spiritually fit will have the edge. While many pastors may be offended by some of Oswald's conjectures and while Oswald offers no statistical data for these conjectures, this researcher believes Oswald's observations are sound.

Finally, the researcher finds refreshing Oswald's encouragement to pastors to serve where they are gifted and planted. Oswald argues that God gifts pastors with different skills for ministry. Some pastors are called to small rural congregations, while some are called to large urban or suburban corporate congregations. Oswald challenges the very American idea that as pastors gain skills and tenure, they should be moving up to larger and more prestigious churches. Oswald's argument is that some pastors are called to serve big churches and some are not. When, for example, pastors are very gifted in ministering to a congregation of one hundred individuals, those pastors should not necessarily feel inclined to move to a church of two hundred individuals. The ministry done by the larger church is different from the ministry done by the smaller church. Both are significant and both are ordained by God.

Also influential in the world of clergy self-care is the work of Fred Lehr.<sup>18</sup> Lehr has over thirty years of congregational pastoral leadership, hospital chaplaincy, and office

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<sup>18</sup> J. Fred Lehr, *Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-Hour Work Week and Other Self-Defeating Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).

counseling work. His work relies heavily upon family systems theory, addiction recovery models, and Myers-Briggs type indicators.

Lehr suggests that pastors are indeed called into ministry by God, but for many other reasons pastors tend to be codependent individuals with a strong drive for affirmation and love from God and their parishioners. For Lehr, clergy self-care must involve dealing with issues of codependence and establishing healthy boundaries.

### **Regaining Balance through Self-Care**

Clergy self-care requires one to first admit and accept that one is born flawed and limited. It requires one to accept that the call to ministry is an impossible call. It only becomes possible when God covenants with the pastor to guide, strengthen, and sustain the earthly shepherd within the difficult vocation of ministry. Mark Miller-McLemore sums up the difficult reality of ministry: “Ministry is uncontrolled, unpredictable, and sometimes demonic. There have been times when I thought my theme scripture was, ‘For thy sake we are being killed all the day long,’ (Psalm 44:22, Rom. 8:36, RSV)”<sup>19</sup>

Below are some important areas of individual self-care this author has gleaned from personal ministry, research articles, and the following texts: Roy Oswald’s *Clergy Self-Care*,<sup>20</sup> Fred Lehr’s *Clergy Burnout*,<sup>21</sup> Kirk Jones’ *Resting in the Storm*,<sup>22</sup> Ronald Richardson’s *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*,<sup>23</sup> and G Lloyd Rediger’s *Clergy Killers*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Miller-McLemore, "Revaluing 'Self-Care' as a Practice of Ministry," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 10, no. 1 (2011): 211.

<sup>20</sup> Oswald, *Clergy Self Care*.

<sup>21</sup> Lehr.

**Exercise:** One's body is a gift from God. If one neglects one's body, the body may become a burden or simply useless. It is just as much a sin to neglect one's physical self as it is to neglect one's spiritual self. Pastors become hypocrites when they challenge their parishioners to be healthier when they themselves practice none of the healthy disciplines they espouse.

**Nutrition:** In many families and congregations food equals love. For most pastors the lifestyle of pastoring is a sedentary one filled with food. Pastors need to watch their intake and feel free to say, "No thank you."

**Relaxation:** When there is so much to do and so many needs it is difficult for the pastor to get away. Even when pastors are relaxing, they tend to be multitasking (e.g., answering e-mails, crafting sermons, etc.). Clergy must learn that it is not only okay, but it is essential that they get away. Perhaps it is helpful to reframe the meaning of retreating and getting away. Relaxing is not about retreating or getting away. As we learn from Christ, retreating is about moving toward God. Getting away is really about getting in tune with oneself and with God, so that later one can re-engage the world with ministry.

**Spiritual self-care:** Pastors spend a good bit of time in the Word and in prayer. The question is, how much of that is for the church and how much of it is for his or her own edification? For pastors to lead their parishioners in a journey into God's Word, the pastor has to be in God's word—personally. For the pastor to lead the congregation in

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<sup>22</sup> Kirk Byron Jones, *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Ronald W. Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations under Attack* (Louisville, KY: Westminster J. Knox Press, 1997).

prayer or to pray on behalf of a parishioner, the pastor must have a strong personal prayer relationship with God.

**Marriage relationship:** Shortly after this author was married an older pastor pulled him aside and reminded him of the sage wisdom, “If your wife ain’t happy, nobody’s happy.” In truth, marriage is not about happiness as much as it is about a covenantal relationship. In marriage the pastor has given him or herself to another. Ministry and congregations challenge the pastor to ignore the covenant of marriage, to ignore the needs of the spouse, and to put the church first. For the sake of the church however, the pastor must first be a good spouse and must love and be loved in the marriage relationship, in order to be the strong pastor and godly role model for marriage that the congregation wants the pastor to be.

**Family Relationships:** The pastor has not always been a pastor. Prior to ordination, the pastor was a son or daughter, brother or sister, grandchild, cousin, etc. These designations and relationships continue on into the ministry. For most pastors, family relationships grow within the ministry. The pastor becomes a father or mother, a grandfather or grandmother, etc. Here again, congregations intentionally and unintentionally encourage the pastor to put these familial relationships second to the relationships and needs of the congregation. For the sake of the church, the pastor must maintain healthy connections to his or her family before being able to develop healthy connections to the congregation.

**Family of origin work:** For a pastor to fully understand who he or she is and to fully understand why he or she behaves in certain ways, in certain situations, the pastor must take the time to do family of origin work. For example, if the pastor has unresolved

issues of pain or unforgiveness with his or her parents, those issues need to be dealt with in healthy ways.

**Boundaries:** As with Christians being in the world but not of the world, the pastor is in the congregation but is not of the congregation.<sup>25</sup> That said, the role of pastor is a relational one. To function properly a pastor must maintain a dynamic and open relationship with God, his or her family, and the congregation. Within this intricate dance between closeness and separateness, the pastor must be able to love the people and to be loved by the people without being subsumed by them. Self-care means the pastor is guarding the integrity of the self. The pastor must understand and be able to express boundaries: “This is who I am; this is who I am not.” “This is what I believe; this is what I do not believe.” “This is where my space ends; this is where your space begins.” “This is what I will do for you; this is what I will not do for you.” “This is where I must take care of my own needs first; otherwise I cannot adequately help care for yours.”

**Goal reviews:** There is a delightful Peanuts cartoon in which Charlie Brown shoots an arrow into a wall and then goes up to the wall and draws the target around the arrow. Without regular goal setting and goal review, pastors miss the opportunity for personal growth, development, and achievement. Pastors without goals to motivate them, tend not to experience personal growth.

**Calendar control:** Pastors must be willing to maintain control of their own calendars. When a day off is scheduled, the pastor must ensure that the congregation understands and honors this and the pastor must also honor it. Time off and Sabbath keeping are woven into the story of creation by God. It is not a suggestion, it is a

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<sup>25</sup> Miller-McLemore: 129.

commandment and it is necessary for the sake of the pastor's personal health, the health of the pastor's family, and the health of the congregation.

**Social outlets:** Our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a God of relationships. Being created in the image of this relational God, pastors need relationships. In this case, pastors need friends with whom they can simply be open and relaxed, and not be pastor. For many pastors, “friends” are drawn from their own congregations. When this happens, relationship lines can become confused and in the midst of crisis or pastoral need the professional objectivity of the pastor is not available. Pastors must remain close to those within their church but they must have friends outside the church with whom they can be emotionally intimate.

**The pastor needs a pastor:** Pastors know full well the value of a close pastoral relationship for confession, spiritual direction, etc. In the history of the church, the bishop has traditionally been the pastor to the pastors. In reality, however, most bishops (especially in this author's own denomination of the ELCA) do not have time to be pastor to the pastors. Most bishops are not geographically or spiritually close to the pastors they serve. Many bishops find it impossible to be pastor and chief disciplinarian to the pastors they serve. Pastors need pastors: spiritual leaders with whom they can loosen the skeletons from their closets, confessors who can hear the pastor's confessions and announce God's forgiveness, and spiritual directors who can speak God's Word of love and direction into their lives.

**Clergy support groups:** Clergy are a unique group of folks, with unique needs and unique struggles that only fellow clergy understand. Clergy support groups offer

pastors a safe haven for sharing their struggles, for gaining encouragement, and for gaining insight from those who have been through it before.

**Professional therapy:** Years ago this author was at a conference in which the keynote speaker began his address by saying, “I see a psychologist once a month, not because I'm crazy, but because I'm healthy. This church is not well served by crazy pastors.” While the speaker of these words and the setting in which he spoke them have been lost in time, the words themselves have not. If one has a sore tooth one goes to the dentist. If one has an ache or pain one sees a physician. If one has an emotional wound, for one's own health and the health of the church, a professional therapist should be engaged.

### **Jesus, the Model for Ministry**

In many ways, Jesus' own ministry is a model example of how pastors can do the hard work of ministry without getting burned out or frustrated. “Jesus didn't allow his caring to completely overextend him so that he had no energy for primary things. He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sake of a broken world, yet in spite of the magnitude of his mission, he did not allow himself to get so strung out that he lost his center and his relationship with God.”<sup>26</sup> Note a few of the Gospel passages that point to Jesus retreating for self-care:

Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Oswald, *Clergy Self Care*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Mark 3:7



On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida.<sup>28</sup>

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.<sup>29</sup>

But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.<sup>30</sup>

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.<sup>31</sup>

Roy Oswald teaches pastors: “From time to time we need to be reminded that the redemption of the world has already been accomplished for us. Our own personal crucifixion will not add one iota to what Christ has already done for us.”<sup>32</sup> Pastors are not the church, they are not the saviors of the church, and they are not the saviors of any individual within the church. Pastors are shepherds, called to and gifted for Word and sacrament ministry. While pastors are called to point beyond themselves to the real Savior of the world, they are as much in need of the Savior as anyone else.

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<sup>28</sup> Luke 9:10

<sup>29</sup> Luke 6:12

<sup>30</sup> Luke 5:15-16

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 14:22–23

<sup>32</sup> Oswald, *Clergy Self Care*, 18.

### **Hope Lives**

The good news is that pastors can live healthy lives even with their human limitations. But to do so requires getting in touch with and dealing with the one who is arguably the pastor's greatest enemy—the self.<sup>33</sup> When a pastor is willing to look within to find and claim the limitations and brokenness of the self, then the pastor can look outward and find a God seeking to bring healing and wholeness. Hopefully the pastor will also look outward and find a congregation who seeks healing and wholeness for its pastor, so that the pastor may lead them to a place of greater well-being.

Pastors must be responsible for their own self-care. The congregation cannot take accountability for the pastor's self-care. The congregation can, however, give the pastor permission to care for these needs, give the pastor time to care for these needs, challenge the pastor to care for these needs, and even hold the pastor accountable for caring for these needs.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 209

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

**To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.**

Micah 6:1–8 reads:

- 1 Hear what the LORD says:  
Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.
- 2 Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.
- 3 “O my people, what have I done to you?  
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!
- 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses,  
Aaron, and Miriam.
- 5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab  
devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”
- 6 “With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?
- 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God? <sup>1</sup>

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

In Micah 6:1-2, God summons God's people Israel into court. At the Lord's behest the mountains and the hills are called forward. From the text, it is unclear whether these formations of the earth represent witnesses or the jury. Either way, they are significant. What has been around longer than the mountains and hills? It is the mountains and the hills that have been witnesses to God's creation, steadfastness, love, and faithfulness for all of time. Here, they have borne witness to God's love and faithfulness to Israel. At Sinai, God established a covenant with God's people. While God has been faithful to that covenant, the people have not. In these core proceedings God is the plaintiff and God's people, collectively, are the defendant.

In opening statements God asks: "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!"<sup>2</sup>

The prophet Micah offers four powerful reminders of God's divine goodness toward Israel. First, the prophet recalls the most defining event in all of Jewish history; the rescue from Egypt, the Exodus. The Exodus was not about the migration of God's people from one place to another. The coming out of Egypt was an act of redemption. "From the house of bondage I redeemed you.' The verb 'redeem' (*padah*) means to free

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<sup>1</sup> Micah 6:1-8

<sup>2</sup> Micah 6:3

someone who is bound by legal obligation by the payment of a price.... No redemption price, however, is named other than Yahweh's manifestation of grace and power."<sup>3</sup> The second act of grace, the second bit of evidence that the prophet brings before the people, is the sending of leaders to those who have been redeemed. Specifically, Micah points to Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sister Miriam. Micah then reminds the people that God delivered them from the cunning and trickery of Balaam, who sought to curse them, but was unable to harm them. "The reference here is to that last desperate plot to prevent Israel from entering the Promised Land. Balak intended to use magic spells to cripple the fighting ability of the armies of Israel. God turned Balak's curses into blessings through the mouth of Balaam (Num. 22–24). The triumph of Yahweh over the powers of magic is regarded as one of the great saving acts of God in Old Testament theology."<sup>4</sup> Finally the prophet asks the people to remember all of God's faithfulness to them from Shittim to Gilgal, from the plains of Moab where the Israelites built camps all the way to the Jordan River. It was at Shittim where God punished the people for becoming idolaters. It was also at Shittim where God did not reject God's people for their idolatrous ways. Gilgal represents the place of their first encampment in Canaan. Here the prophet reminds the people that it was in fact God that provided for their successful crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Again, despite their sinful ways, God kept the covenantal promise made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of God's children. "The statement surely implies that without Yahweh's decisive intervention, Israel would have had no chance in

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<sup>3</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), Micah 6:4–5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the world. Everything depends on these startling, unparalleled events to which the prophetic speaker bears testimony.”<sup>5</sup>

Of theological significance is the last phrase in verse five: “that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” God is reminding the people that their rescue, that their salvation, has not come by their own hands but by God’s. Their deliverance did not come because they earned it or deserved it or achieved it on their own; their deliverance came because of the covenantal relationship that God had established with God’s people at Sinai. This is a relationship of love.

Then instead of confessing their transgressions, accepting God's mercy and love, and moving forward with the Lord, the people seek to appease God through the sacrificial system. Israel asks what she must do to put herself back into a good relationship with God. She offers lavish sacrifices. In verse six she offers burnt offerings of calves a year old. In verse seven she offers thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil. At the end of verse seven she is even willing to give up her firstborn. “The questions about sacrifice are comprehensive. Burnt offerings represented total dedication. Calves a year old represented the most desirable kind of sacrificial animal. Thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil represented lavish sacrifice. One’s first-born represents one’s most valuable possession.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 132.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas, TX: Word Pub., 1990), 51.

In verse eight, the prophet Micah speaks clearly for God. When one approaches God, what is significant is not what is in one's hands but what is in one's heart. God calls humanity, "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>7</sup>

To do justice comes from the Hebrew word *mispat*. It does not simply mean to do no harm to another person. This phrase means to help others, to promote the health and well-being of one's neighbor, to promote welfare, and to protect and defend others. Here the Lord converts the sacrificial offerings proffered (e.g., calves, rivers of oil) to sacrificial offerings where one gives of one's self to one's neighbor.

To love mercy finds its root in the Hebrew word *hesed*. *Hesed* reflects God's steadfast love and covenantal loyalty toward God's people. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the rescue (from slavery, sin, and death). The restoration of God's people belongs to God alone. God the creator has acted and will continue to act to redeem God's people.<sup>8</sup>

The theologian Brueggemann helps with the connection between justice (*mispat*) and mercy (*hesed*):

The two terms, *mispat* and *hesed*, stand at the center of Israel's faith-talk. Indeed *mispat* most often comes in a pair with *sedeqah* (righteousness) and *hesed* most often comes in a pair with 'amunah ("faithfulness.") If we extrapolate according to Israel's preferred rhetorical practice, we are given Israel's two most important word pairs, "justice and righteousness," "steadfast love and faithfulness," that echo with love of neighbor and love of God. The first pair, "justice and righteousness," concerns the neighborhood. The second pair, "steadfast love and

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<sup>7</sup> Micah 6:8b

<sup>8</sup> John J. Scullion, *God in the Old Testament*, ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, vol. 2 (NY: Doubleday, 1992).

faithfulness," concerns love of God, so that Micah's first two components allude to "the two great commandments."<sup>9</sup>

Finally the Lord completes the great triad command of Micah 6:8 with "to walk humbly with your God." "'Walking' in the Bible is a metaphor for a life journey or a life performance. 'Being on the way' is a life chance and a life performance. It refers to Torah obedience and is transposed in the New Testament into discipleship as Christians are 'followers of the way,' the way of Torah, the way of Jesus, the way of well-being."<sup>10</sup>

Walking humbly with your God is to abandon self-centeredness, it is to surrender pride, and it is to recognize that one is always walking in relationship with another. The phrase here has double meaning. First, one walks with God. God is Creator and sustainer. God is the standard of mercy and faithfulness. God is an inexhaustible font of forgiveness and love. God's entire focus is on redeeming and uplifting the created. Second, one walks with one's neighbor. God created us to be in relationship with one another. Blessed with differing skills and abilities we are dependent upon one another. Born in the image of God and therefore in love, we are dependent upon one another to witness and experience the love of God as manifested in our neighbor.

The God of the Exodus, the God of the resurrection, invites us to walk a pathway of life in solidarity with God, in solidarity with one another. Bruce Ellis Benson writes:

The Christian can only offer them [the teachings of Christ] in a spirit of deep humility, precisely because they are examples of being truly humble, of being dependent on one another, of loving even those who do not love us back. Of course, even these examples must be offered up in political discourse only in a spirit of respect and with a willingness to dialogue with the other... rather than

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Walk Humbly with Your God: Micah 6:8," *Journal for Preachers* 33, no. 4 (2010): 15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



starting by focusing on *me*, the focus begins on the other. Of course this is fully in line with what Jesus says. His injunctions are what one does *in response to the other*—whether the widow, the stranger, the enemy, or the one who demands one's clothing. In regard to these last two, Jesus in effect says, "Do the opposite of what you would be inclined to do"—instead of hating in return, love; instead of resisting the demand, give freely of even that which is not demanded. In not responding in kind, one changes the entire structure of the relation: it is now structured by love.<sup>11</sup>

### The Greatest Commandment

<sup>34</sup> When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup> and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" <sup>37</sup> He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>12</sup>

As the prophet Micah sought to bring three commandments together to form one<sup>13</sup>, in the above text from Matthew 22, Jesus marries two great commandments. Jesus is being tested by Pharisees. They ask: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus replies to the Pharisee with the two following commandments:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18)

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce Ellis Benson, "Radical Democracy and Radical Christianity," *Political Theology* 10, no. 2 (2009): 253.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 22:34–40.

<sup>13</sup> Micah 6:8

Jesus draws his answer from the Shema, a “Jewish declaration of faith found in Deut. 6:4, which reads (literally), ‘Hear you, Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.’”<sup>14</sup> Jesus completes his thought in verse 39: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Here Jesus teaches that fulfilling the laws of the Pentateuch and the teachings of the prophets necessitates obedience to this twofold love commandment. “The two love commandments belong together, covering the vertical (relationship with God) and the horizontal (relationship with others) dimensions. The first entails the second; the second presupposes and depends on the first.”<sup>15</sup>

Brueggemann teaches:

In the core Mosaic proclamation of Deut. 6:5-6, immediately following the summons that Israel should listen (Shema), Israel is told: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.” Moses nicely juxtaposes love and keep commandments, because doing the will of the beloved is the way we enact love. Moreover, commandments are to be kept “in your heart,” that is, they are not extrinsic, imposed, or coerced, but inhaled and embraced as one's own true will and intention.<sup>16</sup>

Brueggemann seeks to enhance the traditional understanding of love in the

Hebrew texts. In the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* he states:

Love in the Old Testament is basically a spontaneous feeling which impels to self-giving (cf., Lev. 19:18) or, in relation to things, to the seizure of the object which awakens the feeling, or to the performance of the action in which pleasure is taken. Love is an inexplicable power of soul given in the inward person: (Deut.

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<sup>14</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row Publishers and Society of Biblical Literature. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 939.

<sup>15</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word Books, Incorporated, 1998), 648.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Duty as Delight and Desire,” *Journal for Preachers* 18, no. 1 (1994): 10.

6:5). One loves “with all one’s heart and soul and strength” (Deut. 6:5; 13:4) if one does justice to the feeling of love.<sup>17</sup>

Brueggemann expounds on the way one loves God and neighbor.

Believers are those who love God with their whole heart, or more colloquially for Christians, "love the Lord Jesus." Such "love" is to be understood in all its rich implication, both as *agape* and *eros*, as true heart's desire. This is imagery not often utilized in our Calvinist inheritance, beset as we are with a heavy sense of duty. But alongside duty, in any serious relationship are desire and delight, the energetic will to be with the one loved, to please the one loved, to find in the joy of the one loved, one's own true joy. Thus one in love is constantly asking in the most exaggerated way, what else can I do in order to delight the beloved? In such a context, one does not count the cost, but anticipates that when the beloved is moved in joy, it will be one's own true joy as well. Indeed, in such a condition, one can find joy only in the joy of the beloved, and not apart from the joy of the beloved.<sup>18</sup>

Again, the covenantal relationship of love comes to bear on this conversation.

God, who is love, delights as God's children show love to God by loving one another and serving one another. The commands that Jesus links cannot be divorced one from the other.

Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.<sup>19</sup>

The commands are mutually fulfilling—for God and neighbor.

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<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.1 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 22-23.

<sup>18</sup> Brueggemann, "Duty as Delight and Desire," 5.

<sup>19</sup> 1 John 4:20-21

## **THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **From One River to Another**

As God brought rescue through waters, God continues to rescue through waters. The above Micah text contains two water crossing stories. The first, in the Exodus, when God opened the waters of the Red Sea allowing the children of Israel to cross the waters into freedom from their bondage in Egypt. The second story is of crossing the waters of the Jordan into the Promised Land.

As God brought release to those in bondage in Egypt through water, God promises release to all who are in bondage through the waters of holy baptism. As Christ obeyed the Father's command and entered the waters of the Jordan for his own baptism, Christians today are invited to join Christ in the waters of baptism to find freedom. The freedom sought is not freedom from chains and manacles, but freedom from the powers of sin, death, and the devil. This freedom allows the individual to live a life of worship to God and service to one's neighbor. At the end of one's earthly journey it is one's relationship with the Son that allows for the second crossing, not across the Jordan into the Promised Land, but across the threshold of death into everlasting life.

At the center of one's relationship with Christ is the cross. Creation, sin, and death all have their center at the cross. Everything in the New Testament receives meaning from, and has its focal point in, the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. "Thus the center is occupied not by a cross and resurrection, but by the resurrection of the crucified Christ, which qualifies his death as something that has happened to us, and the cross of the risen Christ, which reveals and makes accessible to those who are dying his

resurrection from the dead.”<sup>20</sup> The linchpin of Christianity is the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the cross would not have meaning, and Jesus would be nothing more than another prominent historical figure.

### **It All Comes Down to This**

It is quite comforting to believe God’s love for humanity is so great it would embody Christ Jesus on earth, but the Word made flesh is not enough. People’s lives are inextricably encumbered by the chaos of sin and death. The children of God need a savior. Without first being freed from the torments of sin and death, one is not functionally able to look to and imitate Christ as a model of the godly life.

Our salvation comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the resurrection, Jesus ushers in a new creation. Christianity is not a spectator sport focused on the cross—it is about dying and rising in Christ. If one wishes to be raised in Christ, one must die in Christ. In order to die and rise, one must go through the cross. “Then something new begins: the life of *faith*, the life of trusting God. Through the cross and resurrection God reveals and works his [*sic*] will in us.”<sup>21</sup> Through Christ on the cross, God invades the human world of dust, sin and death, to put old selves to death and offer humanity the potential for new life in Christ.

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<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 204.

<sup>21</sup> Gerhard O. Forde, *Where God Meets Man; Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 40.

As Jesus hung on the cross for the love he freely gave to the ungodly, he hung on the cross for everyone. Hans Küng expresses well all those who hang on the cross with Jesus:

There are many who hang on the cross: not only unsuccessful revolutionaries, prisoners, those condemned to death, not only the incurably sick, the complete failures, those who are weary of life and those who despair of themselves and of the world. There are many who hang on the cross: tormented by cares and oppressed by their fellow men, overwhelmed by demands and worn out by boredom, crushed by fear and poisoned by hatred, forgotten by friends and ignored by the media. Is not everyone in fact hanging on his [*sic*] own cross?<sup>22</sup>

And what does the assurance of God's salvation mean for humanity? It means people have the potential for freedom; freedom to act as children of God, proclaiming the gospel in word and deed. By this, salvation is a gift, promised through the death of our savior Jesus Christ and looking for fulfillment in the life hereafter. Meanwhile, Christians are to participate in the saving action of Christ as they minister to the home-bound, proclaim the gospel, eat with the outcasts of our society, and care for the health and well-being of one another.

### **God's Children in Crisis**

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

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<sup>22</sup> Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1984), 576.

<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”<sup>23</sup>

God created and continues to create individuals as dynamic, wonderfully made and whole people. The apostle Paul teaches that “our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless”.<sup>24</sup> This wholeness, health and well-being points not only to one’s physical, emotional and spiritual health, but includes all of God’s creation. It is about being in tune, in harmony with life.

Brueggemann teaches that this harmony is best described with the biblical word shalom.

The persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony and prosperity is not captured in any single word or idea in the Bible, and a cluster of words is required to express its many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. But the term that in recent discussions has been used to summarize that controlling vision is shalom... Shalom is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors which make communal harmony joyous and effective.<sup>25</sup>

God’s intent for creation, as seen in the creation stories, is shalom. Built into creation, however, is free-will. The free-will God offers each individual is the freedom to claim and love God, to love and serve the neighbor, and to freely choose to be good stewards of God’s creation.

Unfortunately, free-will also becomes the foundation for broken relationships, broken covenants and sin. It is this sin that threatens health and wellness and brings about disease.

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<sup>23</sup> Luke 4:18–21.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Thess. 5:23.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*, Shalom Resource (New York: United Church Press, 1982), 15-16.

In human brokenness, people freely push God to the margins of their lives. Individuals choose to trust the self instead of God. They choose their own wisdom over God's wisdom. They fashion their own rules for life rather than living by God's commands. They choose what to consume based on what feels good or tastes good, without regard for how it pollutes or defiles their own mind, body, spirit, relationships or environment. It is this sin, this brokenness, which cries out for healing and redemption.

God enters the broken world through the Son. "His acts of healing the sick, forgiving the guilty, raising the dead, and feeding the hungry are all actions of reestablishing God's will for shalom in a world gone chaotic by callous self-seeking."<sup>26</sup>

Fredrick Buechner couches God's desire for shalom within his definition of grace:

The grace of God means something like: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you.<sup>27</sup>

"The vision of wholeness, which is the supreme will of the biblical God, is the outgrowth of a covenant of shalom, in which person are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community with none to make them afraid."<sup>28</sup>

When one understands health in this larger context, one realizes health is not strictly a personal matter. Health and well-being is a shared endeavor and responsibility of the whole community, and the community in relationship with God. "Indeed, God did not

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 39.

<sup>28</sup> Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*, 16-17.



send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”<sup>29</sup>

The conversation about clergy health and wellness finds deeper meaning in liberation theology. Liberation theology teaches of God's preferential solidarity with the poor. While God loves all of God's children equally, God preferentially reaches out for the poor, the marginalized, the weak, and the outcasts. A good example of this preferential care is found in family system dynamics. Consider two young brothers physically fighting with one another; one is older, larger and stronger than his younger brother. The boys' father intervenes in the fisticuffs to protect and defend the younger, smaller brother. The father loves both brothers equally, but exercises preferential treatment for one over the other when that one is in special need.

Liberation theology has its roots in Third World countries. Its origin may cause one to think of God's preferential option for the poor extending to those who are spiritually, financially and or nutritionally impoverished by unjust governmental systems in some other part of the world. Is it possible, however, to be spiritually impoverished, yet hiding behind the façade of a prominent title and nice clothing in a first world country?

Clergy by their calling and authority are people who have power and privilege. Could this office of power and privilege become an unhealthy boundary that separates the pastor from the people? So that, even as congregational members are holding their pastor up as model of the Godly life, their pastor is living a life of unhealthy isolation. It is this

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<sup>29</sup> John 3:17.

isolation that allows for and fosters many of the unhealthy habits of clergy (e.g., over eating, lack of physical activity, substance abuse, depression, internet pornography, etc.).

This author contends that in the midst of power, prestige, public visibility, praise and adoring congregational members, pastors can find themselves isolated, lonely and forgotten. Even as the pastor proclaims from the pulpit that the people are to demonstrate their love for God by loving their neighbor, the neighbor who silently yearns to glimpse the face of God, to hear words of forgiveness, to feel communal connections and to find hope may be that pastor in the pulpit.

Yves Congar describes this ability to connect to and worship God through the neighbor as the sacrament of the neighbor: “There is one that is privileged to be a paradoxical sign of God, in relation to which men [*sic*] are able to manifest their deepest commitment—our neighbor. The sacrament of our neighbor!”<sup>30</sup>

Gustavo Gutiérrez, professor of Liberation Theology reminds the Christian that it is not enough to embrace this theology with one's heart. (Cf., “So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”<sup>31</sup>) This theology, and all Christian theologies, demand action on the part of the believer. It is not enough to say I love God and I love my neighbor. To love God is to reach out and love one's neighbor in concrete and tangible ways.

The spirituality of liberation will center on a conversion to the neighbor, the oppressed person, the exploited social class, the despised ethnic group, the dominated country. Our conversion to the Lord implies this conversion to the neighbor. Evangelical conversion is indeed the cornerstone of all spirituality. Conversion means a radical transformation of ourselves; it means thinking, feeling, and living as Christ-- present in

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<sup>30</sup> Yves Congar, *The Wide World My Parish; Salvation and Its Problems* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961), 124.

<sup>31</sup> James 2:17

exploited and alienated persons. To be converted is to commit oneself to the process of the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to commit oneself lucidly, realistically, and concretely. It means to commit oneself not only generously, but also with an analysis of the situation and a strategy of action.<sup>32</sup>

### Illness

One who is ill experiences a loss of health or wholeness. Illness interrupts life, limits one potential activity, intrudes upon personal relationships and conveys suffering. Illness sometimes brings one closer to God and neighbor, but not always. A person with serious or chronic illness may feel his or her own body or mental state as lacking wholeness and harmony. Some may even feel as if their bodies or minds are beyond their control.<sup>33</sup> Illness isolates people from one another. Ultimately, ill people may feel separated from the one who promises to love them eternally—God. They may cry out with the psalmist: “O Lord, why do you cast me off?”<sup>34</sup> “I am shut in so that I cannot escape;”<sup>35</sup> “my companions are in darkness”<sup>36</sup>

### Healing

If illness is disruption and imbalance within the body, mind, spirit, family, etc., then healing is restoration to wholeness and balance. Healing seeks out new life for one's

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<sup>32</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 118.

<sup>33</sup> S. Kay Toombs, *The Meaning of Illness: A Phenomenological Account of the Different Perspectives of Physician and Patient* (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Psalm 88:14

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 88:8

<sup>36</sup> Psalm 88:18

relationship with God, one's neighbor, and one's self. "It involves curing when possible, but embraces more than cure. When we limit illness to disease and health care to cure, we miss the deeper dimensions of healing through restoration to God."<sup>37</sup>

The Old and New Testaments declare the healing power of God. At the inauguration of Israel's history, God proclaims, "I am the Lord who heals you"<sup>38</sup> The Lord promises to come at the end as "the sun of righteousness . . . with healing in its wings"<sup>39</sup> In the end, God promises to heal all who call on the Lord. God will "swallow up death forever" and "wipe away the tears from all faces."<sup>40</sup>

When the Bible speaks of healing, it frequently anticipates this "perfect health" that God holds in store for people through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:16). In such passages healing includes curing, restoring, saving, forgiving, transforming, achieving peace, and gaining victory over death itself. God's healing, however, is not limited to the end of life or time. The Bible also proclaims a God who heals illness and cures diseases in the present time—the healing of the sick and the alleviation of suffering that all people seek in their everyday lives. The triune God heals within and through the work of creating, redeeming, and sustaining humankind. God the Creator heals through the natural processes of the body and is active in the work of healers everywhere.<sup>41</sup>

God's love for all God's children and the all of creation motivates God to include

healing as an important part of salvation. In the New Testament, it is Jesus as the incarnate Son of the creator who seeks to be the savior and healer of all.

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<sup>37</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (Chicago: ELCA, 2003), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Exod. 15:26

<sup>39</sup> Malachi 4:2

<sup>40</sup> Isaiah 25:7-8; cf. Rev. 7:17

<sup>41</sup> Martin E. Marty, *Health and Medicine in the Lutheran Tradition: Being Well* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 23-24.

The Gospels introduce Jesus as a healer<sup>42</sup> and are filled with stories of his forgiving and healing work. Jesus healed because in him was the full presence of God, and the church continues to proclaim the forgiving and healing presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament. In offering the hope of the resurrection to come, Jesus stands with us in our illness and suffering with his healing presence. Christians celebrate that final healing, salvation from sin and death has been won for us irrevocably in Christ's death and resurrection. God's healing comes through the Holy Spirit who heals, sanctifies, and transforms through a variety of gifts. In and through the Church, the Holy Spirit works to heal through the ministry of Word and Sacrament, intercessions and liturgies for healing, prayer and the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, pastoral care and servant ministries, the mutual consolation of Christian sisters and brothers, and congregational and church-related health ministries that reach out to all people.<sup>43</sup>

The healing effort of the God the Exodus and resurrection must be the foundation for the believing community's covenantal obligation to the health and well-being of all individuals and relationships. God offers health and healing through relationships with one another, with creation, and with Christ. The Christian's calling is to be a faithful stewards first of his or her own health and then to fulfill covenantal obligations from God for the health and well-being of others.

### **Wellness**

If health and illness represent two extremes in one's life, then wellness or well-being represents the dynamic relationship between the two. Wellness accounts for the fact that all people struggle with, sin, brokenness, and disease. God created each individual with a drive for wellness; a balance between health and illness. Well-being is being well, being in a relationship of unity with one's self, one's God, one's family, community, and environment.

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 4:23-25

<sup>43</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 6.

Reading Psalm 85:10-13:

- 10       Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
           righteousness and peace will kiss each other.  
 11       Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,  
           and righteousness will look down from the sky.  
 12       The Lord will give what is good,  
           and our land will yield its increase.  
 13       Righteousness will go before him,  
           and will make a path for his steps.

Within this text, one finds the language of wellness—steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness and peace. Brueggemann brings it together: “The cluster of terms here witnesses to the full harmonization of heaven and earth in a peaceable, fruitful enterprise under the benevolent generosity of Yahweh.”<sup>44</sup>

Biblically, the concept of wellness comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*. The peace of *shalom* is not the absence of violence; it is the whole of God's creation living in harmony, caring for one another and supporting one another. “The Hebrews tended to use the term primarily for interpersonal or social relations where it comes very close to meaning “justice.” When justice is done it is seen as God's gift to the people, and the prosperity (*shalom*) comes to the people when they live faithfully under God's covenant.”<sup>45</sup>

Brueggemann points to what it looks like as God's children live under God's covenant, in anticipation of the fulfillment of God's *Shalom*.

People who hope are not people who have a vague sense that things will work out all right. People who hope are those who know the name of God and the

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<sup>44</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 223-24.

<sup>45</sup> William Klassen, "Peace: New Testament" Vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 207.

characteristic gifts of God: hesed [covenantal love], raham [mercy], and 'amunah [faithfulness], the three great qualities that eventuate in shalom. People who hope have complete confidence in God's coming shalom, a rule of order, peace, security, justice, and abundance. Without denying any present disorder, confusion, or distortion, people who hope, watch, wait, pray, and expect, know that God's shalom is as good as done. People who hope are people who act in the conviction that God's future is reliably "present tense" and act upon it before it is fully in hand.<sup>46</sup>

In the epigraph of this work, Loder prays from *Guerrillas of Grace*:

Oh persistent God,  
let how much it all matters  
    pry me off dead center  
        so if I am moved inside  
            to tears, or sighs, or screams, or smiles or dreams,  
they will be real  
    and I will be in touch with who I am  
        and who you are  
            and who my sisters and brothers are.<sup>47</sup>

Wellness is about being in touch with the self God created; not the self of one's imagination or dreams, but the real self—finite and limited. Wellness is about being in touch with God—creator, redeemer and sanctifier. Wellness is about being in relationship with all of one's neighbors. It is about embracing the covenant that God establishes with the self and enacting a covenant of love with the self, one's neighbors and all of creation. The children of God's covenant "have all things in common: remembering together, hoping together, neighboring together, setting together in God's generosity, in God's transformation, in God's miraculous shalom . . . coming soon."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Suffering Produces Hope," in *Dr. A. Vanlier Hunter, Jr. Memorial Lecture* (Baltimore, MD: : Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, 1998), 2.

<sup>47</sup> Loder, 97.

<sup>48</sup> Brueggemann, "Suffering Produces Hope," 4.

## **HISTORICAL**

### **A Health Crisis in Our Churches**

Today, answering the call to the ministry, to serve the Lord and to serve the children of God, may be hazardous to one's health. In the past twenty to thirty years, many major studies have been done to conclusively prove that pastors struggle with health. The results of the surveys have caused church bodies to challenge their pastors to be better stewards of their health—physical, spiritual, and emotional. While national denominations put the onus of clergy care on the clergy, this project seeks to educate parishioners about the state of clergy health and invite them to claim their covenantal relationship with their pastor and to assist their pastor in becoming healthy.

In the late 1980s, Fuller Theological Seminary conducted a survey of pastors. A summary of findings follows:

- 90% of pastors work more than 46 hours per week
- 80% of pastors believe that pastoral ministry is affecting their families negatively.
- 33% of pastors believe that being in the ministry is hazardous to their families.
- 75% of pastors have reported a significant crisis due to stress in their ministry.
- 50% of pastors reported feeling unable to meet the needs of ministry.
- 90% of pastors reported feeling inadequately trained to cope with the demands of ministry.
- 40% of pastors reported at least one serious conflict with at least one parishioner each month.
- 70% of pastors reported that they do not have a close friend.



- 37% of pastors reported having inappropriate sexual relations with a congregation member.
- 70% of pastors reported having a lower self-image of themselves then when they began the ministry.<sup>49</sup>

In 1994 Michael Morris and Priscilla Blanton reported in the journal *Family*

*Relations:*

- Clergy ranked in the top 10% of the population in terms of education but rank 325th out of 432 occupations in terms of salary.
- Clergy families lack adequate quality time together, eroding family identity and cohesion.
- Boundary ambiguity in clergy families produces concerns regarding privacy and triangulation.
- Clergy are described as being in the crossfire as they try to juggle the expectations of self, family, congregation, denomination, and God.<sup>50</sup>

In April of 2000, the Presbyterian Church, USA reported on a study of part-time and full-time professional counselors, retained by the Presbyterian Church who provide counseling to its pastors. According to these counselors the top problem areas were:

vocational struggle, grief, community building among pastors, promoting clergy wellness and self-care, sickness, faith, transition care for new ministers, promoting continuing education, marriage and family, conflict intervention, and financial troubles. The counselors surveyed reported their greatest frustrations with clergy were in the areas of financial troubles, community building among

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<sup>49</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *Health and Medicine in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: Faith, Liturgy, and Wholeness* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 151.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Lowe Morris and Priscilla White Blanton, "The Influence of Work-Related Stressors on Clergy Husbands and Their Wives," *Family Relations* 43, no. 2 (April 1994): 189-95.

pastors, promoting clergy wellness and self-care, conflict intervention, marriage and family issues, and pastoral care to families of ministers.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, the report offered that the single greatest need was promoting clergy wellness and self-care.

In 2001, the Lilly Endowment funded a major research project by Duke University on pastoral leadership. An initial report disseminated to program participants included the following:

1. Six in ten clergy say that they have never doubted their call to the ministry and seven in ten reported that they have never considered leaving pastoral ministry.
2. Over 70% reported being very satisfied with their current position, their family life, their relationships with lay leaders, and other members of the congregations.
3. Half or fewer indicated satisfaction with the following characteristics: relationships with other clergy, opportunities for continuing education, support from denominational officials, one's current salary and benefits, one's spiritual life, and, lowest of all, one's sense of overall effectiveness as a pastoral leader in one's current congregation.
4. Over 70% of clergy expressed the difficulty of reaching people with the Gospel as one of the primary problems faced by pastors in today's world. Additionally clergy indicated needing help in discerning and promoting the congregation's vision, administering the congregation's work, and training congregational members to exercise their own ministries.
5. Two-thirds of the clergy report that their congregations have experienced some form of conflict over the past two years.
6. Seventy-six percent of clergy reported their general health as excellent or very good. On the other hand, 10% reported being depressed, 40% reported feeling at times depressed or worn out some or most of the time, and 76% reported being overweight or obese (by BMI). The problem of weight is greatest for male clergy, 79% compared to clergywomen, 52%.<sup>52</sup>

In an exhaustive study of Lutheran Pastors (ELCA), between October 2007 and mid-February 2008, pastors were asked to identify health strengths and risks, degree of

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<sup>51</sup> J.N. Guinn, *Who Pastor to Ministers* (Presbyterian Church USA, Research Services, April 11, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> Bob Wells, "Which Way to Clergy Health?," in *Divinity* (2002), 6.

work limitation associated with physical or emotional problems, and employee perception of their health concerns. The following are concerns gleaned from the study:<sup>53</sup>

- 81% are at risk for poor nutrition.
- 63% are at risk for ill-health due to excess body weight.
- 61% are at risk of emotional ill-health.
- 53% are at risk for ill-health due to lack of exercise.
- 12% of our members are on depression medication.
- 16% list depression as a medical condition.
- 46% have 5 or more risk factors.

During the 1950s pastors were among the healthiest individuals in our culture.

Pastors had lower than average obesity, lower than average hypertension, lower than average suicide rates, lower than average addiction, and lower than average divorce rates. As our society has gotten sicker, so have pastors.<sup>54</sup> As parishioners come to church to lay their burdens down, clergy too quickly pick those burdens up.

Also leading to the sickness of pastors is the change in technology. Computers, internet, cell phones, instant messaging, texting, tweeting, and Facebook have all played a role in the declining health of pastors. There is an expectation on the part of parishioners that pastors embrace and utilize the latest technology. While there is an expectation that pastors are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for emergencies, today there is an expectation that pastors will be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for even the most minor needs. Parishioners expect to be

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<sup>53</sup> Wagstrom, 12-16.

<sup>54</sup> Wells, 6.

able to e-mail their pastor and receive an answer within hours. Parishioners expect to be able to text their pastor and receive an answer within minutes. Parishioners expect that pastors will know the latest news of their lives through Facebook and twitter. In subtle ways, technology is dramatically increasing the pastor's work week, decreasing time off and vacations, and increasing stress and burn-out.<sup>55</sup>

### **Covenantal Relationships**

Reflecting on Micah 6:1-8, Matthew 22:34-40, and the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ, one is reminded of the covenantal relationship with God, which God establishes out of love for God's children. This God who brought release to the captives through the Exodus, this God who saw the children of Israel into the Promised Land, and this God who brings freedom from sin, death, and the devil in the waters of baptism, establishes a covenant with God's people today. God's love and faithfulness toward God's people is not only a covenantal promise, it is a reality. In return God invites God's children into a covenantal relationship with one another. From Micah 6:8, God's children are commanded "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." In Matthew 22, Jesus declares, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

When a pastor and his or her family accept a call to serve a congregation, that pastor in very formal and informal ways, enters into a covenantal relationship with that body of believers. The official expectations inherent in this covenant includes such things

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<sup>55</sup> Lehr, 109-110.

as: conducting worship, preaching sermons, leading Bible studies, attending to the sick and dying, visiting the members, attending to church business, etc. Unofficial expectations of the office may include such things as attending to plumbing needs within the church building and serving as computer/technology expert within the church and in members' homes. Without any healthy boundaries, a pastor can easily do the work of ministry twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Sadly, if a pastor was so unhealthy as to work without appropriate boundaries, the parishioners served would not only allow it, they would celebrate it.

If the pastor enters into a covenantal relationship with the congregation, then the membership of the congregation ought to see themselves as entering into a covenantal relationship with their pastor. Well beyond appropriate fiduciary compensation, this covenant must include such things as: encouraging and respecting the pastor's time off, establishing and living within the limits of what the pastor is called to do and what the pastor is not called to do, and encouraging and creating possibilities to enhance the pastor's physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

If the pastor comes to the church with a spouse and children, the covenantal relationship must be extended to include these important family members. Typically, congregations enjoy the presence of a pastoral family within the life of their congregation. Unfortunately, as with pastors, congregations often have unrealistic expectations of the pastor's spouse and children. For the pastoral family this may include an expectation that it is a perfect family unit and a model of the godly life. For the spouse this may include such things as expecting attendance at all church social functions, teaching Sunday school classes, leading Bible studies, etc. Perhaps the most destructive

expectation is that the pastor's spouse be expected to surrender personal marriage and family time for the good of the church family.

If the pastor comes to the church with children, the children often grow up with the feeling that they live in a fishbowl. Congregation members tend to watch them more closely, have unrealistic expectations of the children's behavior, and publicly share when they notice the “pastor's kid” doing something wrong. Again, the most hurtful expectation that congregation members have of the pastor's children is that they should willingly surrender time with mommy or daddy for the sake of the church family.

Congregations must understand that as real people, pastors often struggle with separating their personal and familial lives from the life of the congregation. If the pastor has fallen behind in his or her prayer life, the congregation may not be aware of it, but congregation members will feel it in subtle ways. If the pastor has fallen behind in an exercise regimen or healthy diet, the resulting diminished health will affect the way the pastor serves the congregation. If the pastor is allowed to work on days off or skip vacation days the result is more hours of ministry but a lower quality of ministry and potential burn-out that may lead to the pastor leaving the church and/or the ministry. If the pastor is fighting with his or her spouse, the congregation may be unaware of the fight but the anxiety of it will be played out in the congregation. If the pastor's spouse is feeling unhappy or unfulfilled in the marriage or congregation, the congregation may never know it, but that stress will be played out in the church. If the pastor is struggling with his or her children, that struggle will be played out in the congregation.

The point of this project is to help the congregation embrace and grow into a covenantal relationship with their pastor and his or her family. When the congregation

understands and is attentive to the unique needs of their pastor, the pastor is likely to be healthier and happier in ministry. When the congregation understands this and is attentive to the covenantal marriage vows their pastor made with his or her spouse, the pastor is likely to have a more joy-filled marriage relationship. When the congregation understands and is attentive to the unique needs of its pastor's children, the pastor will appreciate a greater sense of familial wholeness and health. As the pastor experiences greater health and well-being in all aspects of his or her life, the pastor is able to better fulfill his or her ministry to the congregation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology employed by this author and offers a description of the research design that was implemented to meet project goals.

The goal of this project was to create greater awareness of clergy health needs by a congregation's mutual ministry committee. Additionally the author hoped and expected that the participants would come to better understand that they are in a mutual covenantal relationship of love and care with their pastor. Ultimately the author expects that the developed program will be reproducible and adopted for use in other congregations.

The author employed a methodological approach by first identifying a very blatant problem in our churches—that many pastors are unhealthy. Through observations within this pastor's context of ministry and interactions with church members, it became clear to this author that many parishioners do not have a clear understanding of the special needs of a pastor and a pastor's family. Further, it was clear to this researcher that most congregation members do not appreciate the covenantal relationship that exists between a pastor and the congregation.



### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this study is: If the faith community embraces a covenantal relationship from God to God's people and from neighbor to neighbor, then the people of God ought to see that covenantal relationship extending from pastor to congregation, and from congregation to pastor. When the congregation understands this mutual relationship of love and care and when the people of God are more aware of the stresses related to ministry and the need for healthy pastors, then the people of God will compassionately reach out to their pastors with love and care. As the congregation cares for its pastor, it enhances the pastor's personal health and his or her relationships with self, spouse, children, congregational members, and church at large. Consequently this pastor can lead the congregation and congregation members to a place of greater health and well-being.

### **Intervention**

The researcher explored research and literature pertaining first to covenantal relationships and then to clergy care. The literature revealed a strong biblical and theological argument for a covenantal relationship between clergy and parishioners. In the area of clergy care, it was disheartening to discover very few accessible materials that focused on congregational members caring for clergy. In the study of clergy care most contemporary work begins with a foundation of family systems theory that subsequently points to the clergy person who must be responsible for his or her own self-care.

### **Targeted Group**

The targeted group for this study was a pre-existing pastoral care committee. Within the Lutheran tradition of which this author is a participant, this committee is designated a mutual ministry committee. The overarching goals of the committee are: to assist in communication between pastor and congregation, to help the pastor hear the needs of the congregation, and to help the congregation hear the needs of the pastor. This group typically meets quarterly and will also convene when special needs arise. For the sake of this study, the six regular members of this group agreed to meet on three Saturday mornings and three Thursday evenings, for one to one and a half hours.

### **Research Design**

The author designed this project to be a mixed method research study utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to analyze the effect of the intervention. With respect to quantitative data analysis, the researcher accepts that with only six participants, the sampling is extremely limited. Additionally, because these congregation members serve on a committee focused on the pastor's ministry to the congregation, they are not representative of the whole congregation. While survey results cannot be statistically relevant with such a small number of participants, they can be qualitatively relevant. To this end, the researcher developed a ten question pretest (Appendix E) and a ten question posttest (Appendix E). The pretest would establish a baseline from which the researcher could note changes in the responses of committee members. The researcher utilized the online service, SurveyMonkey, for creation of the survey, and online completion of the survey by respondents.

For the qualitative aspects of the study, the researcher noted changes in perceptions, understandings, and other concepts related to the project. Primary data analysis would be based upon observations, interactions with the group, oral discussion, and survey results. Even though the researcher sought to carry out this project according to appropriate research protocol, qualitative research naturally has bias built into it. The main instrument of measurement is the researcher. While the researcher sought to collect, analyze, and interpret data without bias. One can accept that bias is built into questions asked, analysis of answers proffered by participants, and the overall examination of the project.

### **The Course**

The author designed a six-part course (Appendix A) on clergy well-being. Each session was expected to take one to one and a half hours to complete. The six sessions include:

1. Covenantal relationships
2. Family systems theory
3. The role of the pastoral care committee
4. Appropriate covenantal expectations of a pastor toward the congregation
5. Appropriate covenantal expectations of a congregation toward its pastor
6. A pastor's needs and practical ways to provide pastoral support to a pastor

Additional materials for the project such as the registration form (Appendix B), the consent/privacy form (Appendix C), and orientation form (Appendix D), were created by the author.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

This chapter is about how the author implemented the project, the impact of the project on the participants, and the outcomes of the project study. It includes a detailed discussion of the project and how it was conducted in the context setting.

#### **Targeted Study Group**

The researcher utilized a pre-existing group within the church to conduct this study. The group used was the mutual ministry committee. This standing committee is in place because of its effectiveness and because it is mandated by the congregation's constitution. The primary focus of this group is to facilitate communication between the pastor and the congregation; to help the pastor hear the needs and concerns of the congregation, and to help the congregation hear the needs and concerns of the pastor. The following text from James guides this caring group's ministry.

<sup>13</sup> Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James 5:13–20

The participants received a promise that their identities would be protected and kept confidential for the purpose of this study. In reality, however, they represent a functional committee of the church and as such, their identities are well known within the church. For the sake of this project they are being identified by Greek characters.

Individual  $\Omega$ :  $\Omega$  is a middle-aged gentleman, well-established as a leader within the church. He and his wife are lifelong Lutherans. Together they joined this pastor's church about 20 years ago when marriage and a new job brought them to the area.

Individual  $\Pi$ :  $\Pi$  is a vibrant, older woman. She has been a widow for about eight years. She has a strong passion for this congregation and for this pastor. She too is a lifelong Lutheran and has been a member of this church family for over 50 years.

Individual  $\Sigma$ :  $\Sigma$  is a middle-aged woman. She grew up in the Pilgrim Holiness church tradition. She expresses love for the church, the music, the strong traditions, and the liturgical setting of worship, but she is confounded by Lutheran theology. Steeped in Holiness theology she struggles to understand God as one of love and grace. She continues to believe that she does good works to earn God's favor but in the end will probably fall short. Her husband was once an Episcopal Priest. In her words, "low pay, poor respect, and endless conflict drove him out of the pulpit into the private sector."

Individual  $\Delta$ :  $\Delta$  is a middle-aged female and a very talented musician. She serves the church each Sunday morning as a musician without pay. She grew up in a very fundamentalist church. As a young adult she left the church. She remained outside the church for approximately 30 years before someone in this congregation invited her to visit. In her words, "growing up in the household that I did, I had very low self-esteem and usually hated myself. I didn't need to go to church and hear from the pulpit that I was

a worthless sinner and that God also hated me. I love my new church home; where I have learned that God loves me.” Individual  $\Delta$  has been a member of this congregation for about two years. This is the first church committee that she has served on.

Individual  $\Lambda$ :  $\Lambda$  is a young man and newly-married professional from the community. After graduating from college,  $\Lambda$  took a job in the community’s education system. He came into the church and joined as a single man. Wise beyond his years, he has served on many committees. He is a lifelong Christian but joining this church became his first experience as a Christian in the Lutheran tradition.

Individual  $\Psi$ :  $\Psi$  is retired, older man. He and his wife are both lifelong Lutherans. Upon coming to this community for a factory position, he and his wife joined this church. He and his wife are both very active in the congregation and community. In his time as congregational member, he has probably served upon every committee and held every office that a gentleman can.

### **Data Collection**

Because this was a pre-existing body of the congregation, the author already knew much of the background information about the six participants. This body, as a support system for this pastor, was well aware of the doctor of ministry program at United Theological Seminary. As the project developed, the author had not planned to use this committee of the church but through the guidance of doctoral advisers it became clear that utilization of this group would best meet the needs of this project. This mutual ministry committee was delighted to learn that they would have the opportunity to participate in the project.

Data collection began with the researcher handing out a registration form, confidentiality form, and orientation form. These were completed and returned at a regularly scheduled meeting of this body. Also at this meeting, the group agreed to meet three consecutive Saturdays and three consecutive Thursday to satisfy the project needs of this researcher. The researcher then explained to the group that a survey had been prepared for them utilizing the online service SurveyMonkey. Following this meeting, each participant was e-mailed the web address for the survey. All six participants filled out the ten question pretest within forty-eight hours.

### **Session 1**

Session one was on covenantal relationships. For this session and all subsequent sessions, each participant received an outline of the session (Appendix A). The session began with a reading of the biblical text Micah 6:1-8. The researcher then invited conversation on the text. The purpose of the conversation was to engage the participants in thinking and sharing, and to establish that the six sessions would be dynamic and interactive.

After an opening prayer the researcher thanked the participants for being present, thanked them for completing the online survey, and reminded them of the six topics to be covered over the six sessions.

Conversation on covenants began with parity treaties versus suzerainty treaties. Participants were asked to consider a corollary between these types of treaties or covenants, and covenants between a parent and child versus a covenant between a husband and wife. Conversation was then directed toward the structure of a typical

suzerainty treaty, with the Sinai Covenant used as the model for this treaty. Participants were invited to use Bibles to explore the Bible passages related to the Sinai Covenant.

Using Scripture and open discussion the class explored God's covenant with Noah, God's covenant with Abraham, and God's covenant with David.

Discussion then moved back to the Micah passage. The researcher lifted out the passage: "To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk calmly with your God." The researcher then led brief word studies on *mispat* and *hesed*. The group's participants examined this text from Micah and considered what it meant for them as Christians, and for members of the congregation.

Finally the researcher moved the discussion into the symbolic relationship between the Exodus and baptism and God's command to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

It was an excellent session, filled with spirited involvement and enthusiasm for this seed of new possibility buried in the Scriptures. As this was a pre-existing group, rapport was already present. This researcher noted that all present seemed open to participate and contribute to the session. The session closed with prayer and eagerness about returning for the next session.

## Session 2

Session two began with a viewing and discussion of Pixar's, *For the Birds*.<sup>2</sup> This four-minute film demonstrates in clever and humorous ways the topic of systems theory.

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<sup>2</sup> Ralph Egglestron, "*For the Birds*," (Walt Disney Pictures, 2001).



After a brief discussion of how one might see this film played out in one's family and congregation, the researcher officially opened session two with a word of prayer.

The researcher led the participants in an elementary review of the human body. The group considered how cells work together to form organs and how organ systems work together to function as a whole. Participants took the conversation into a discussion of how beautifully and miraculously God created the human body.

This discussion allowed the researcher to segue into Paul's description of the body of Christ and what it is to be *en Christo*, in Christ. A brief Bible study ensued, examining Paul's use of body imagery in:

- Mutual encouragement in Christ (Romans 1:12)
- Mutual up building (Romans 14:19)
- Manifestations of the Spirit are given for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7)
- Spiritual gifts are for building up the church (1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:12)

The group took a brief break and came back to a presentation on anxiety based on the session outline. As anxiety is part of every person's life to some extent, the group related well to the materials presented. The participants discussed their own experiences of anxiety, both chronic and acute. The researcher directed the conversation into triggers of anxiety found within the congregation and the responses of congregations to anxiety. The researcher had to remind the group that these triggers to anxiety and reactions to anxiety are not all specific to this congregation but are represented in some way in almost every congregation. Discussion ensued as participants shared examples of every stressor and reactions from the congregation's history.

Session two finished with a prayer on the faithfulness of God throughout the congregation's history.

### **Session 3**

Session three began with a viewing of *A Goose Story*.<sup>3</sup> This short video was produced by the education department at Eastern Kentucky University. It examines the social structure of a flock of geese. While the original intended audience was "troubled" youth, the video worked well as an introduction to the dynamics of a healthy group of people.

As this congregation has a pre-existing mutual ministry committee and as this committee has been in existence for many years, preceding even the present pastor, the researcher went into this session with concern about how the material would be received. The group received this material as eagerly as they had in the previous two sessions. They went into this session with the attitude of: "Let's see what we've been missing."

The researcher embarked on a discussion of Martin Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers and a reflection from session two on Paul's image of the body of Christ. The group was reminded that each member is an important part of the body of Christ. God imbued each member with differing gifts; each essential for the functioning of the body of Christ, this congregation, and this committee.

Each member of the group received a handout on the purposes and functions of a mutual ministry committee as found in the outline for Session 3 (Appendix A). The researcher walked the participants through the purposes and functions of the committee.

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<sup>3</sup> "A Goose Story," (Training Resource Center, Eastern Kentucky University, 1998).

The committee members then launched into a discussion about what they believed the original purpose of the committee to be—to facilitate communication from congregation to pastor and to hold the pastor accountable for what the pastor does or fails to do in fulfillment of the position. The idea that this committee might serve the pastor as a means of communication from pastor to congregation was intriguing to the committee members. They then moved the conversation to the concept of holding the congregation accountable for how it treats or mistreats the pastor and how it represents or misrepresents the body of Christ. The researcher then invited them to consider whether a pastor is called by God to serve a church or whether the pastor is hired to do a job.

While the researcher went into this session expecting it to be a mundane exploration of concepts the group already understood and the various responsibilities the group was already carrying out, the researcher was surprised by the receptivity of the group and members' willingness to explore new directions for the committee's work.

#### **Session 4**

Session four began with the opening liturgy from when this pastor was installed as senior pastor of the church (Appendix A). The portion of liturgy used contains all the promises from pastor to people. After moving through the liturgy, more than half of the participants remembered and reflected upon that day and that worship service. The researcher gave thanks for the opportunity to serve, and shared what a blessing it is to be a blessing to others. Prayer followed.

Included in this session's handout was a list of "The 10 Best Practices for Health and Well-being<sup>4</sup>" from the ELCA. Participants took turns reading the list. The researcher invited each participant to share their personal feelings on why the particular health practice is good for the individual and for the church. After the group had gone through the list of ten, the leader of the committee turned to the researcher and asked him to go through the list again—to briefly discuss what each item means to him and to share honestly how he is doing with each item.

While this turn of the tables was unexpected, it was an opportunity for the group to hear about how many of the stresses of ministry (as discussed in the previous session) played out in this pastor's life, family, and ministry.

After a brief break, the conversation moved to the positive effects of a healthy pastor and pastoral family on a congregation. The group openly discussed issues of ministerial health and the effects on the congregation. Participants with seniority in the congregation shared positive and negative experiences from previous pastors, noting that the congregation only perceives the negative effects on the congregation, and rarely considers, or does not even care about the underlying issues in the pastor's life.

The committee's chairperson closed the session with a word of prayer, specifically thankful for the pastor and pastor's family, and prayerful that God would continue to bless and protect them all.

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<sup>4</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Ten Best Practices for Health and Wellness" <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Rostered-Leadership/Leadership-Support/Health/Best-Practices.aspx> (accessed January, 12, 2012).

### **Session 5**

Session five began as session four had, with the liturgy from this pastor's installation service. The portion lifted out for this day was the promises of the congregation toward the pastor. Again, conversation ensued remembering the particular day and the blessing it held for pastor and congregation. The researcher formally opened in prayer.

The researcher thanked the participants for their participation in the previous sessions and remarked how touched he was that they would take over the conversation and focus it back on the pastor. The pastor offered gratitude that they had acted on God's behalf, checking on their pastor's health and well-being and challenging their pastor and themselves to be accountable to their pastor.

The researcher then referred back to the handout of the ELCA's ten best practices for health and wellness (Appendix A). The focus for this session was appropriate covenantal expectations of a pastor toward the congregation. While the focus of this session shifted from covenantal expectations of a pastor toward a congregation to covenantal expectations of a congregation toward its pastor, the conversation seemed to be a continuation of the previous session's conversation. It was clear to this researcher that the participants had thought about the best practices and the implications for themselves, their families, the entire congregation and the pastor.

After some discussion, the researcher reigned in the group and invited conversation regarding how the pastor, the pastor's family, and the whole congregation benefits when members of the congregation try to live out these ten best practices. Here again the group did not just discuss the best practices in theory, but offered concrete

illustrations from the history of the congregation as to how important these are for every part of the congregational system. Conversation was then directed to a place of recommendations for how the pastor can best help the congregation achieve the goals of this best practices list. Out of the discussion came the idea that perhaps the best way for the pastor to encourage the congregation toward the ten best practices, is by living them himself and being a model of the godly life as described therein.

The researcher was impressed by how frequently the participants lifted up the idea of covenantal relationships from session one during this session. Prayer closed the session.

### **Session 6**

Session six was about a pastor's needs and practical ways of supporting one's pastor. Because the researcher sought for this course to be dynamic, in the sense that it could be changed and adjusted to best suit the needs of the group, this session was based to some extent upon the previous sessions and group discussion.

The researcher opened the session with the personal story of his own call to ministry. The story included his childhood assumptions that pastors were not real people, but were special people of God. He shared how this assumption had to be debunked by other pastors before he could even consider that God would call him to the ministry. He expressed how as a young pastor he looked so forward to serving God and the people of God. He described anticipating something of a utopian experience in ministry. He described the pain when he was first attacked, first distrusted, and first disrespected by

congregation members. He then offered a prayer of thankfulness to a covenantal God who had called him, equipped him, sustained him, protected him, and loved him.

The researcher then moved back to a review of the major stressors in a congregation and the ways those stressors are played out in the congregation, especially with respect to the pastor.

The researcher then invited the group to consider the handout on The Burn-out Cycle (Appendix G). After presenting the cycle, participants shared stories from the congregation's past regarding how they have witnessed the cycle firsthand.

The researcher then presented a number of specific areas and ways for the congregation to assist in the health and well-being of the pastor and his or her family.

This list included:

1. Participate in ministry with the pastor.
2. Pray for the pastor, the pastor's family, and the pastor's specific needs.
3. Tell the pastor your specific needs without assuming that the pastor will already know them.
4. Provide for and encourage your pastor to participate in spiritual direction, therapy, counseling, and or support groups as necessary.
5. Encourage and allow for your pastor's physical health.
6. Ensure that your pastor has opportunity for personal prayer and Bible study; ensure that your pastor's worship needs are being met.
7. Assist and protect your pastor's boundaries, provide for safe counseling areas, offer visitation help, and guard your pastor's time off.
8. Protect the pastor from personally financing ministries within the church. Ensure that the pastor is appropriately compensated financially.
9. Support the pastor's vocation as child, spouse, and parent. Encourage and allow for the pastor to maintain healthy relationships with his or her family.
10. Consider the needs of the pastor's spouse. Are his or her needs being met? Is the congregation treating the spouse appropriately?
11. Consider the needs of the pastor's children. Are their needs being met in the church and in the community? Does the congregation allow and encourage the

pastor to be father or mother to the children, before taking on the needs of the congregation?

12. Thank your pastor.
13. Forgive your pastor.
14. Thank God for your pastor.
15. Love your pastor.

This session continued longer than previous sessions. The researcher was heartened that the enthusiasm of the group and their desire to enhance the health of the congregation and the pastor never waned. The group committed with one another to continue to think about tangible ways of enhancing the pastor's potential for health and well-being, that in turn they would be enhancing the pastor's ministry to the congregation, and the ministry of the congregation to the community.

The researcher thanked the participants of this project and reminded them that their important work was the work of manifesting God's love in the congregation. The researcher reminded them that a post-course survey was requested of them and would contain the same questions as the pre-course survey. The researcher closed with prayer, and then went around the table and personally thanked each individual.

As with before the course, the link to the post-course survey on SurveyMonkey was e-mailed to each participant.

The researcher accepts that there were only six participants in this committee, but was nonetheless impressed that all six completed the pre-course survey, all six attended each of the sessions, and all six completed the post-course survey. Their dedication to God, to their congregation, and to their pastor is evident.



### **Analysis of Data Collection Instruments**

The primary data collection for this project came through observation and conversation with participants in this project. The researcher believes they all shared their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes openly during the six sessions. All six demonstrated clear comprehension of the materials and were able to integrate learnings from previous sessions into current sessions.

Utilizing the online service SurveyMonkey, pretest and posttest responses were scored for easy comparison.

Question: “How much of a sense of belonging do you have at church?” In this question the researcher was examining the system that is the mutual ministry committee. Results clearly show that emotional bonding occurred during the six sessions and participants generally gained a greater sense of their important role within the congregation and body of Christ.

Question: “How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about your needs?” Respondents demonstrated growth in their relationship with the pastor and a sense of greater freedom with respect to sharing their needs with him.

Question: “How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs?” Respondents showed significant growth on this question. On the pretest survey only one expressed feeling extremely safe discussing the pastor's needs with the pastor. In the posttest survey all respondents expressed that they would feel extremely safe or very safe talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs. In this researcher's mind this is significant as it speaks positively about the purpose and outcome of this project.

Question: “Who is responsible for the pastor's health and well-being?” The shift in answers from pretest to posttest in this question was telling. In the pretest, emphasis on the pastor's health was given to the pastor, the pastor’s family, and the bishop. In the posttest all respondents included themselves and the congregation as responsible for the pastor's health and well-being.

Question: “How should the pastor prioritize his life? Rate the following from most important to least important.” In pretest and posttest results, God came out on top. In other words, all respondents believed that the pastor should put God first in his life. The only difference in the responses between pretest and posttest is that in the pretest most respondents believed the pastor should put familial needs ahead of self needs. In the posttest respondents demonstrated a greater understanding that by caring for the self first, the pastor is better able to care for his family.

Question: “How do the church members wish the pastor prioritized his life?” In this question, the researcher sought to discover the difference between what the mutual ministry committee thought about the healthy priorities for the pastor and what they perceived the congregation’s priorities for the pastor to be. Results demonstrated that the congregation wishes the pastor would put his own needs at the bottom of the scale, only above community needs. Two respondents answered that the congregation would prefer the pastor to put congregational needs ahead of God as the pastor prioritizes his life. While these responses are sad, they are no doubt the reality and point to the reason for this project.

Question: “How realistic are the church expectations of what a pastor can accomplish in a week.” This question sought to examine the group’s understanding of the

many and various duties of a pastor through the week. Pretest results versus posttest results demonstrated a greater understanding of the time struggles of a pastor as he or she seeks to prioritize life.

Question: “How many hours do you think your pastor works in a week?” This question was simply offered out of the researcher's own curiosity. He was interested to discover that after the pretest, none of the respondents asked for the real answer. Pretest to posttest results demonstrate that in the course of the program, participants came to an understanding that the pastor works between fifty and seventy-five hours each week. Of note is that at the next regularly scheduled quarterly meeting of this body, they did ask for the answer to the question. The answer offered was fifty to seventy-five hours each week, depending on the week. Also of note with respect to this question, is the fact that the ELCA recommends a fifty-five hour work week to be the standard for a full-time ELCA pastor. This congregation, however, calls the pastor to a forty hour work week.

The final two questions: “When the pastor came to our church, he promised to love and support us.” “When the pastor came to our church, we promised to love and support him.” These simple true false questions were aimed at the foundation of the covenantal relationship between pastor and congregation. In pretests and posttests all respondents answered affirmatively—the pastor promised to love and support us; we promised to love and support the pastor.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

[God] teach us how to respond to the needs of why thy children in ways that do not undermine the self, but inspire and enlighten the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

These words are lifted from a prayer written by Howard Thurman, former Dean of the Chapel at Boston University and Howard University. Thurman understands that as Christ puts others first, we feel obliged as good Christians to put others first. However, to always put another person or obligation first is not biblical, nor is it Christian. On the contrary, to always put another person or obligation first is unhealthy and ultimately destructive to the self. Pastors and others who claim the name Christian are not called to be selfish or self-centered, but must prioritize life. When God is first, one becomes free to allow God to guide and prioritize the rest of one's life.

Putting the self, self-awareness, and self-care second to God, one is prepared through God to be the healthiest and most capable spouse, parent, pastor, and civic leader possible. Kirk Jones puts it succinctly: “Well-doing, devoid of proper self-care is, at best doing well poorly. Exemplary care for others is rooted in vigilant self-care.”<sup>2</sup>

In the *Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy*, physician Gwen Hagstrom writes, “God wonderfully creates us as physical, emotional, social, intellectual, vocational, and

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 115.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, 8.

spiritual beings.”<sup>3</sup> The wellness of clergy is achieved as balance happens between these various aspects of one’s life.

Imbalance or disease happens within the congregational system when the laity identify themselves as those needing the care and the pastor as the caregiver. Too often congregational members assume that because the pastor is the principal caregiver, the pastor has special gifts for handling all the struggles of the pastor’s life—familial, professional, physical, emotional, and spiritual—as well as all the struggles of the congregation. In fact, clergy do need help, they do need caregivers in their lives, and they may need even more regular assistance than their parishioners.

For clergy to be effective caregivers they must be healthy themselves. There must be good self-care as well as good care from others. Clergy have special needs, they need to keep themselves replenished, focused, and connected—to God and to others, and maintain a sense of mission with respect to who they are and what they are called to do.

In the end, there must be balance between clergy self-care and care of the clergy by the congregation. The congregation cannot make their pastor well. They can, however, understand the unique stresses and challenges of ministry on a pastor and his or her family. The congregation can help the pastor meet his or her own needs, familial needs, and congregational needs. They can allow time and opportunity for the pastor's well-being. They can protect and defend the pastor's boundaries of space, time, and self.

But the counterpoint on this balance beam of health is that because the congregation cannot make their pastor well, the pastor must claim that health for his or her self. The pastor must engage in practices and disciplines of self-care. The pastor must

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<sup>3</sup> Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004).

learn to prioritize life—putting God first and the self second. Only then can the pastor be the best possible spouse, parent, and congregational leader.

Thomas Droege puts it this way: “The Gospels do not keep us guessing about what Jesus intended to those who came to him for healing. He intended for them to be whole in body, mind, and spirit. What is easily overlooked, however, is that wholeness includes holiness. Those who are healed become healers. Those who are loved it become lovers. Health, in the sense of individual wellness, is always a means to an end and never an end in itself.”<sup>4</sup>

Martin Israel draws this point together beautifully:

The measure of a truly spiritual healing is the steady transformation of the person's character so that he [*sic*] ceases to live up for himself alone, but gives himself ever more unreservedly to others. His vision of fulfillment is no longer limited by the desire for personal gain. Instead the desire is for all people to gain knowledge of God, in whom alone there is eternal life. As a person is healed spiritually, so he gives healing to others that in the end the whole world may be transfigured from dross to spiritual radiance.<sup>5</sup>

### Outcome

Going into this project it was this researcher's hope and prayer that as the work of this committee continues the benefits would be tangible in the pastor's life, in his family's life, in the congregation, and in the community. In this researcher's mind, there is no reason to doubt that this project changed the committee, the pastor, and the church. This researcher was transformed by this project in very powerful ways. For example as the project progressed, the researcher intentionally spent more time in personal prayer. The

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. Droege, *The Faith Factor in Healing* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press, 1991), 116.

<sup>5</sup> Israel, 51.

author has been eating healthier foods, exercising more and getting appropriate amounts of sleep. The author and his spouse have purposefully nurtured their marriage relationship and the author created opportunities to spend a greater quantity and quality time with his children.

Data confirms positive growth in the participants' understanding of covenantal relationships, especially between congregation and pastor. Participants received information about systems theory and the functioning of a mutual ministry committee. More than that, within the sessions they were integrating that information to gain a new perspective on relationships with historical pastors, the present pastor and perhaps future pastors. The researcher was very enthusiastic about the group members' support for one another, the pastor, and their desire to use the biblical idea of covenant to extend their new insights and tools into the ministry of the congregation.

### **Elucidations**

Through this project, the researcher learned many things. All of the project participants have had a lifelong to nearly lifelong experience in the church. This means that each participant has experienced many different pastors. Some pastors are healthy; some are unhealthy. Some pastors are very needy in terms of care, affirmation, validation, etc.; some pastors are more self-supportive and self-reliant. Some pastors accept love from congregation members; some pastors will not accept love from congregation members. As the project went forward, many of the reflections shared by participants were based on relationships with prior pastors. The researcher noted that

each pastor, healthy or unhealthy, has an effect on each parishioner and conditioned the parishioner's presumptions about the needs and care of future pastors.

The researcher also noted that a successful project may result in a double paradigm shift. Pastors who are not accustomed to being ministered to by parishioners, need to learn and accept that it is a healthy practice. Congregation members who are unaccustomed to being ministers to their pastors need to accept that this is a healthy model of ministry for the whole church.

Finally, the researcher came to understand that essential to the success of this project in any setting is a good understanding of a pastor's call to ministry. A hired hand either does the job as expected or is rejected. For a clergy person, however, God brought the pastor into the ministry and into the congregation. The pastor is not perfect and neither is the congregation, but the congregation is a gathering of God's children and the pastor represents one sent by God to be prophet, servant, and leader to that group of people. So then, how does the congregation accept who the pastor is (even a broken clay jar)? How does the pastor accept what and where the congregation is? And how do they both grow through a covenantal relationship with one another, into what God intends for them, that they may both bear fruit—fruit that will last.

### **Repeatability**

The author believes this project has had a positive impact on his ministry context and believes it would be repeatable and beneficial in other contexts.

- The project's six sessions could be done as six separate sessions (as with this project) or they could be collapsed into a retreat setting. For example,



participants could receive two sessions on a Friday evening and four sessions on Saturday.

- The program would be beneficial for mutual ministry committees, church councils, congregational call committees and whole congregations. It may be especially impactful as a congregation prepares to receive a new pastor.
- While the author intended to create a tool for assisting laity with clergy care, the author believes this ministry tool would be advantageous for clergy as well.

### **Conclusion**

For pastor and congregation the covenantal relationship is a cycle of love. In order to love, one must first be loved. In order to forgive, one must first accept forgiveness. In order to offer hope and joy to another one must first receive it. The pastor is called to offer all of this to the congregation. The congregation is called to offer all of this to the pastor. The cycle of care and love continues; this is the covenantal relationship of one neighbor to another.

It is the covenantal relationship with God that makes neighbor to neighbor covenants possible. God is love, God creates out of love, and for no other reason than love, God establishes a covenant with God's people. This is a covenant that begins at creation; a covenant that gains understanding at Sinai; a covenant that comes into full focus on the cross. This God, who divided the waters of chaos, separated the Red Sea, and claims us in the baptismal waters, has been and continues to be the font of love. It is this love that creates us and heals us and sends us forth to love one another.

Ultimately faith and healing is a gift from God. One finds the health and well-being one seeks in life as one learns to embrace the grace filled love of God and as one seeks to love another, as God first loved us.

**APPENDIX A**  
**COURSE OUTLINE**

## COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIPS

### Session One

1. Hittite treaty formulas from the Ancient Near East
  - a. Parity
  - b. Suzerainty/Vassal
2. Typical structure of Suzerain treaty<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Preamble
  - b. Historical prologue
  - c. Stipulations or Commandments
  - d. Provision for the deposit of treaty and its rereading
  - e. Divine witnesses to the treaty
  - f. Blessings and curses
3. Structure of the Sinai covenant
  - a. Preamble
    - i. God says, I am the Lord your God.
    - ii. (Exod. 20:2a, 34:6,7)
  - b. Historical prologue
    - i. God tells the people what God has already done for them
    - ii. I am the God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage
    - iii. (Exod. 20:2b, 19:4; Joshua 24:3-13; 1 Sam 12:8-12; Nehemiah 9)
  - c. Stipulations or Commandments
    - i. God tells the people how they will behave toward God and toward one another.
    - ii. (Exodus 20:3-17; Deut. 5:7-21)
  - d. Preservation and rereading
    - i. The covenant is to be written, stored safely, read regularly, and shared with future generations.
    - ii. Preservation (Exod. 31:18; Deut. 4:13, 31:9, 24-26)
  - e. Witnesses
    - i. Witnesses watch over the covenant to ensure that it is kept.
    - ii. In this covenant, the forces of nature serve as witnesses to the covenant God made with Israel.
    - iii. (Deut. 4:26, 30:19, 31:28, Josh. 24:22,27)
  - f. Blessings and Curses

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<sup>1</sup> H. N. Wendt, *Crossways* (Minneapolis, MN: Crossways International, 1994), 88-98.

- i. If the people take the covenant seriously and obey it they will be blessed.
  - ii. If the people neglect or ignore the covenant they will lose their land.
  - iii. (Deut. 28:1-14, 27:15-26, 28:15-68; cf. Exod. 23:20-33; Leviticus 26; Joshua 8:34)
- 4. Other significant Covenants
  - a. Noahic Covenant
    - i. (Gen. 8:20-9:17)
  - b. Abrahamic Covenant
    - i. (Gen. 12:1-7, 15:9-21; 17:1-21)
  - c. Davidic Covenant
    - i. (2 Sam. 7:1-16)
- 5. Micah 6:1–8
  - a. To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.
    - i. Mispāt
    - ii. Hesed
- 6. Relationship between the Exodus of the Mosaic Covenant and Baptism
  - a. The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt to Pharaoh. We are in bondage to sin, death, and the devil.
  - b. God sent Moses to lead the people across the Red Sea into freedom. God sends Christ, through the cross, to lead us through the waters of baptism into freedom.
  - c. At Sinai the Israelites were given God's commandments. Jesus takes God's two great commandments and merges them into one commandment, loving God means loving one's neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40).
  - d. In the end, God saw the Israelites safely across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Through Christ and the cross, we are afforded safe travel from life through death to new life—resurrection life

## SYSTEMS THEORY

### Session Two Outline

1. Human Body as System
  - a. Systems of life existing within cells
    - i. Cells working together to function as organs
    - ii. Organs (circulatory, respiratory, digestive, skin, etc.) working together to function as a body.
  - b. The mark of organic life is a continuing struggle of balance and imbalance.
    - i. Loss of balance is experienced as sickness.
    - ii. Gross imbalance is death
    - iii. Health is the drive for life.
      1. Health is what an organism does to preserve itself.
      2. Health is how an organism responds to challenges.
      3. Health is how an organism is able to change and adapt.
2. Body of Christ
  - a. Paul described the Body of Christ as comprised of many parts
    - i. Yet it functions as one.
    - ii. To be *en Christo* (in Christ) is to be a part of a living organism, a living community.
  - b. Spiritual care of the Body of Christ “knit and joined together” in Christ involves:
    - i. Mutual encouragement in Christ (Romans 1:12)
    - ii. Mutual up building (Romans 14:19)
    - iii. The manifestations of the Spirit are given for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:7)
    - iv. Spiritual gifts are for building up the church (1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:12)
3. Anxiety
  - a. Anxiety is natural.
  - b. It affects all human relationships, communities, and systems.
  - c. It helps us cope with life.
  - d. It prompts us to respond.
  - e. It helps us respond to threats.
  - f. It helps us see things in a new way.
  - g. Is a basic human emotion.
  - h. It is an automatic response to a threat;
    - i. Real or imagined.

- i. It is derived from the Latin *angere*:
  - i. To cause pain by squeezing.
  - ii. Also from this root: anger, angst, and angina.
- j. It is emotional pain.
- k. Anxiety is not just within us, it connects us.
- l. Anxiety may be Acute or Chronic.
  - i. Acute Anxiety
    - 1. Is generated by crisis or a trauma.
    - 2. Stressors may be positive or negative.
    - 3. Examples: loss of a job, birth of a child.
    - 4. Acute anxiety is situational or time bound.
  - ii. Chronic Anxiety
    - 1. Habitual; cannot be laid to rest.
    - 2. Perpetually present in a person or structured into a relationship.
    - 3. A slight stressor sets the person off.
    - 4. All of us have some triggers that will “set us off.”
      - a. The chronically anxious person has a multitude.
- m. The major triggers of increased anxiety in any congregation:<sup>2</sup>
  - i. Money
  - ii. Issues of Sex and Sexuality
  - iii. Worship Style
  - iv. Pastor’s Leadership Style
  - v. Lay Leadership Style
  - vi. Old vs. New
  - vii. Growth Vs. Survival
  - viii. Staff Conflicts
  - ix. Internal Focus vs. External Focus
  - x. Death of Children
  - xi. Trauma
  - xii. Property
  - xiii. Gap between perception and reality
- n. What anxious congregations do:<sup>3</sup>
  - i. Increase Triangles
  - ii. Focus on Others
  - iii. Blame Others

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<sup>2</sup> Steinke, *Healthy Congregations*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- iv. Spawn Data
- v. Think in Black and White
- vi. Diagnose Others
- vii. See with a Shortened Perspective
- viii. Talk About Others
- ix. Deny Issues Exist
- x. Want a quick Fix
- xi. Operate with Secrecy
- xii. Resort to Sabotage
- xiii. Declare Biblical Inerrancy
- xiv. Herd

#### 4. Questions



## THE ROLE OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

### Session Three Outline

Material in this session comes directly from three sources: *Pastor and People:*

*Making Mutual Ministry Work* by Richard Brueschoff<sup>4</sup>, “A Healthy Approach to Mutual Ministry,” by Sue Lang<sup>5</sup> and “Shaping a Mutual Ministry Committee,” by Rick Summy.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1. PURPOSE

- a. Why have another committee?
  - i. Our Lutheran understanding of the church sees ministry as being shared by all the baptized people of God.
  - ii. At no time can we assume that only the pastor and lay professionals are responsible for ministry.
  - iii. The whole people of God have a ministry
  - iv. The ministry of any pastor, lay professional, and congregation is strengthened when a small group of persons exists who act out of mutual concern for the pastor, lay professionals, and congregation.
- b. Mutual Ministry Committees provide for:
  - i. Open communication concerning the attitudes and conditions within the congregation;
  - ii. Early warnings of misunderstanding within the congregation;
  - iii. A listening post for the pastor, the lay professional, and the congregation;
  - iv. Conflict resolution;
  - v. Appraisal of the ministry of the pastor, the lay professional, and the congregation;
  - vi. Sounding board for the pastor and lay professional in time of personal or professional stress;
  - vii. Identifying continuing education that would assist the ministry of the pastor and lay professional and the goals of the congregation;
  - viii. Concerns for the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the pastor and lay professional and their families;

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<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Brueschoff, *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Sue Lang, "A Healthy Approach to Mutual Ministry," *Lutheran Partners* July-August (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Rick Summy, "Shaping a Mutual Ministry Committee," *Lutheran Partners* July-August (2006).

## 2. FUNCTION

- a. What would a mutual ministry committee do?
  - i. The primary function of a mutual ministry committee is to keep the pastor and staff advised about the conditions within the congregation and to interpret to the congregation the ministry of the professional leaders. The committee's responsibilities and opportunities can be outlined in four general areas or functions.
  - ii. Identifying the professional leadership needs of the congregation and seeking persons to meet those needs through congregational study and survey of leadership needs at the time of pastoral vacancy.
  - iii. Preparing job descriptions for all paid staff persons.
  - iv. Serving as the call committee or interview group when a congregation calls a pastor or employs a lay professional.
  - v. Serving as the exit interview group when a pastor or lay professional leaves the congregation.
  - vi. Serving as a personnel committee for the support staff of the congregation such as the secretary, organist, choir director, and sexton.
- b. Education
  - i. Identifying continuing education possibilities in light of:
    - 1) Concerns and ministry goals of the pastor and lay professionals.
    - 2) Concerns and mission goals of the congregation.
    - 3) Concerns and mission goals of the synod and ELCA.
  - ii. Enabling the pastor and lay professional to participate in continuing education by:
    - 1) Mutual commitment of time.
    - 2) Mutual commitment of money.
    - 3) Shared evaluation and planning.
- c. Evaluation
  - i. Sharing with the pastor and lay professional the expectations of the congregation.
  - ii. Providing for an annual evaluation and theological reflection upon:
    - 1) The ministry of the pastor and lay professionals.
    - 2) The mission of the congregation.
- d. Support
  - i. Serving as a personal and confidential support group to pastor and lay professional.

- ii. Serving as an open communication channel regarding conditions and attitudes within the congregation.
- iii. Serving as agents of reconciliation in time of conflict in the congregation.
- iv. Reviewing annually the details of compensation, housing, pension, and other benefits provided for the pastor and lay professional.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

- a. Who would be on the committee?
  - i. It is recommended that such a committee not be the church council because of its duties and time commitments.
  - ii. At the same time, the committee should not be an informal gathering with specific interests or narrow focus.
  - iii. Groups lacking official status will not be trusted by the pastor, the lay professional, or the congregation.
- b. It is, therefore, recommended that such a committee have representation from various leadership areas within the congregation and be appointed by the church council.
  - i. Nomination of the persons should be made by the president of the congregation and the pastor.
  - ii. Members should also be selected in light of their skills and ability to function on such a conferring and consulting committee.
  - iii. Length of term should be three years to allow sufficient time for experience and trust to develop. Staggering the terms provides continuity.

### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

- a. To whom and for what would they report?
  - i. A mutual ministry committee is accountable to the church council and reports directly and regularly to the council. At the time of reporting, the mutual ministry committee would also forward any recommendations requiring council or congregational action.
  - ii. Committee members are to be accountable to one another for maintaining strict confidentiality of all personal information shared during their work together.
  - iii. The committee would meet a minimum of four times a year. The meeting schedule and agenda will reflect the local situation and the areas of responsibility assumed by the committee.

## APPROPRIATE COVENANTAL EXPECTATIONS OF CONGREGATION TOWARD THE PASTOR

### Session Four Outline

Remember the Installation service for your pastor—your pastor's promises to you.

Pastor *Gramza* in the presence of this congregation will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, and promise to discharge your duties in harmony with the constitutions of the church?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you love, serve, and pray for God's people? Will you nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, leading them by your own example in the use of the means of grace, in faithful service and holy living?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you give faithful witness in the world that God's love may be known in all that you do?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.<sup>7</sup>**

#### 1. ELCA's ten best practices for Health and Wellness<sup>8</sup>

- a. How are these health practices good for us, our families, our churches, and our pastor?
  - i. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
  - ii. Love your neighbor as you love yourself — be an example of self-care as well as caring for others.
  - iii. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy — be intentional about time for rest and renewal within your week, church year, and life in ministry.
  - iv. Honor your body as a gift from God and temple of the Holy Spirit. Feed it healthy foods and build your physical and emotional endurance with regular physical activity.
  - v. Honor your mother, father, siblings, spouse, and/or children with your love, respect, and time.
  - vi. Reflect your faith and use your gifts in your vocation.

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<sup>7</sup> Lutheran Church in America, *Occasional Services: A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Ten Best Practices for Health and Wellness".

- vii. Develop healthy habits to keep your wholeness wheel in balance and to be fit for a ministry of service.
  - viii. Equip yourself to use your gifts effectively to proclaim and live out the Gospel in the world.
  - ix. Practice and seek forgiveness.
  - x. Pray daily.
- 2. How do the above practices and disciplines help our pastor?
- 3. When our pastor is healthier, how does it benefit us:
  - a. As individuals?
  - b. As families?
  - c. As a congregation?
- 4. How can we assist our pastor in these practices and disciplines?
- 5. Open discussion/questions.

## APPROPRIATE COVENANTAL EXPECTATIONS OF PASTOR TOWARD THE CONGREGATION

### Session Five Outline

*Remember the Installation service for your pastor—your promises to your pastor.*

And you, people of God, will you receive this messenger of Jesus Christ, sent by God to serve God's people with the Gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard him as a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God?

**We will and we ask God to help us.**

Will you pray for him, help and honor him for his work's sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

**We will and we ask God to help us.**

*Remember at the end of your pastor's installation, all pastors, men, women, and children were invited to lay hands on him and pray:*

Pour out your Spirit upon *Pastor Jeff* to empower and enlighten his ministry as pastor of *St. John Lutheran Church*. Sustain him as a shepherd who tends the flock of Christ with love and gentleness, and oversees the ministries of the church with vision and wisdom.

Uphold him as a faithful steward of your holy word and life-giving sacraments and a strong sign of reconciliation among all people.

Give courage and fortitude to sustain him in this ministry.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior and Lord, through whom all glory and power and honor are yours in your holy church, both now and forever.

**Amen.**<sup>9</sup>

#### 6. ELCA's ten best practices for Health and Wellness<sup>10</sup>

- a. How are these health practices good for us, our families, our churches, and our pastor?
  - i. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
  - ii. Love your neighbor as you love yourself — be an example of self-care as well as caring for others.
  - iii. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy — be intentional about time for rest and renewal within your week, church year and life in ministry.

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<sup>9</sup> Lutheran Church in America.

<sup>10</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Ten Best Practices for Health and Wellness".

- iv. Honor your body as a gift from God and temple of the Holy Spirit. Feed it healthy foods and build your physical and emotional endurance with regular physical activity.
  - v. Honor your mother, father, siblings, spouse, and/or children with your love, respect, and time.
  - vi. Reflect your faith and use your gifts in your vocation.
  - vii. Develop healthy habits to keep your wholeness wheel in balance and to be fit for a ministry of service.
  - viii. Equip yourself to use your gifts effectively to proclaim and live out the Gospel in the world.
  - ix. Practice and seek forgiveness.
  - x. Pray daily.
7. How do the above practices and disciplines help us?
- a. As individuals
  - b. As families
  - c. As a congregation
8. How can our pastor assist us in these practices and disciplines?
9. How does our pastor benefit by our personal health?
10. Open discussion/questions.

## PASTOR'S NEEDS AND PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR PASTOR

### Session Six Outline

#### 1. Pastors

- a. Pastors are wonderful people.
  - i. They have a calling from God to shepherd God's people.
  - ii. They believe in people.
  - iii. They believe in God.
  - iv. They believe in their calling.
  - v. Pastors often begin congregational calls with a utopian sort of optimism.
  - vi. The "honeymoon" stage is in full swing.
- b. Then the inevitable
- c. Pastors are NOT wonderful people
  - i. The congregation that called him/her
  - ii. The congregation that loved him/her
  - iii. The congregation that had faith in him/her
  - iv. Why would a congregation turn on its own pastor?
    1. Money
    2. Issues of Sex and Sexuality
    3. Worship Style
    4. Pastor's Leadership Style
    5. Lay Leadership Style
    6. Old vs. New
    7. Growth Vs. Survival
    8. Staff Conflicts
    9. Internal Focus vs. External Focus
    10. Death of Children
    11. Trauma
    12. Property
    13. Gap between perception and reality
  - v. What happens when a congregation turns on its own pastor?
    1. Increase Triangles around Pastor
    2. Focus on Pastor
    3. Blame Pastor
    4. Spawn Data about Pastor
    5. Think in Black and White regarding Pastor
    6. Diagnose the Pastor's problems
    7. See with a Shortened Perspective



8. Talk About Pastor
  9. Deny Issues Existed before the arrival of Pastor
  10. Want a Quick Fix (e.g., Firing of Pastor)
  11. Conduct secret meetings without Pastor
  12. Sabotage Pastor's ministry
  13. Use Bible as weapon against Pastor
  14. Herd into same-thinking groups (Often pro or against Pastor)
2. Burn-out Cycle
    - a. See Burn-Out Cycle handout
  3. Why is this Important?
    - a. Shortage of clergy
    - b. Large number of vacant congregations
    - c. Congregations taking 12 – 36 months to get a pastor.
    - d. Congregations work hard in the interim to
      - i. Attract pastor.
      - ii. Prove themselves capable of having a pastor,
      - iii. Compete for a pastor.
    - e. What if a congregation worked as hard to keep their pastor as they work to call a pastor?
  4. Keeping your pastor healthy and happy!
    - a. Be the Church
      - i. You didn't hire your pastor to do all the ministry.
      - ii. You called you pastor to help you and your congregation do ministry.
    - b. Pray
      - i. Don't just offer to pray "in general" for your pastor.
      - ii. Ask you pastor: "What can I pray for?"
      - iii. Tell your pastor or send a note to say you've prayed for him/her and what you've prayed for.
    - c. Ask and Tell
      - i. When you have time ask:
        1. What can I do for you today?
        2. What do you need today?
      - ii. Tell you pastor when you have a need.
        1. Your pastor is not a mind-reader.
        2. Don't expect your pastor to guess your needs.
        3. Your pastor is NOT too busy for you.
    - d. Professional counseling/support

- i. The church is not well served by “crazy” pastors.
  - ii. Healthy pastors need:
    - 1. Professional counseling
    - 2. Support groups
    - 3. A pastor
- e. Physical conditioning
  - i. Stewardship of physical body
  - ii. Exercise
  - iii. Sleep
  - iv. Make exercise a part of call.
- f. A vibrant spiritual life.
  - i. Worship
  - ii. Prayer
  - iii. Bible Study
  - iv. Personal time away with God.
- g. Boundaries
  - i. Support in saying NO
  - ii. Safe counseling areas
  - iii. Visitation help
  - iv. Enforcement/encouragement for days off and vacation
  - v. Sabbatical leave
- h. Money Help
  - i. Pastors are typically among the biggest givers in a congregation
    - 1. When money gets tight pastors feel blame
    - 2. Pastor/pastor’s family gives and donates more
    - 3. Congregation lets them
  - ii. Protect the pastor from personally financing the congregation’s ministry.
  - iii. At budget time consider the pastor’s financial needs.
    - 1. Ask the pastor: “What are your needs?”
    - 2. DO NOT begin the discussion with:
      - a. “How much do we have?” or
      - b. “How much can we afford?”
    - 3. Considering the pastor’s needs lets the pastor and congregation know that the pastor is appreciated and important.
- i. Support the pastor’s vocation as child, spouse, and parent.
  - i. Encourage pastor to nurture family relationships.
    - 1. This is healthy for the pastor and congregation.

2. It is good modeling for healthy families.
- j. Are spouse's needs being met?
  - i. Social
  - ii. Spiritual
  - iii. Mental
  - iv. Physical
  - v. Recreational
  - vi. Freedom from unhealthy congregational expectations
  - vii. The spouse's most important role is to be the spouse of the pastor
- k. Are the kids' needs being met?
  - i. They do pick up the anxiety that the parents try to protect them from.
  - ii. They often struggle with relationships because of unpredictable moving
  - iii. They often struggle with life inside a fishbowl.
  - iv. They act out—family and congregations wonder why?
  - v. They over-focus on the pastor's kids from their inappropriate expectations of PKs (Pastor's Kids)
    1. The PKs act out more.
    2. The cycle cycles out of control
  - vi. PKs have high rates of behavioral problems, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, eating disorders, etc.
  - vii. The over-focus on PKs includes PKs of all ages where the ordained parent is in the congregation.
5. Thank your pastor!
6. Forgive your pastor for not being the perfect pastor you expect.
7. Pray for your pastor.
8. Be thankful for your pastor.
9. Love your pastor!
10. Questions/Comments

**APPENDIX B**  
**REGISTRATION FORM**



## Personal Information

Full Name:

Last

---

*First*

---

*M.I.*

Address:

---

*Street Address*

---

*Apartment/Unit #*

---

*City*

---

*State*

ZIP Code

Preferred Phone:

Alternate Phone:

Preferred Email:

## Church Information

Years as a member  
of St. John LC.

Previous church  
Memberships:

Current Ministry involvement:

Previous Ministry involvement:

Favorite Church  
Work:

Least Favorite Church Work:

**APPENDIX C**  
**CONSENT/PRIVACY FORM**

## CONSENT TO RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

I voluntarily agree to participate in the research project sponsored by the Rev. Jeffery G. Gramza, as a requirement for completion of the Doctor of Ministry degree program offered by United Theological Seminary located in Trotwood, Ohio. I understand that the evaluation of our survey responses, class discussion, and related conversations will be kept strictly confidential and restricted to Rev. Gramza to develop a tool for ministry and will be the basis of his doctoral dissertation.

I understand that the evaluation methods which may involve me are:

1. Recorded observations throughout the process,
2. My completion of evaluation questionnaire(s) and/or surveys,
3. My participation in several interviews throughout the process.

I grant permission for the sessions and/or interviews to be recorded and/or transcribed, and may be used only by Rev. Gramza for analysis of interview data. I grant permission for the evaluation data generated from the above methods to be published in the dissertation and possible future publication(s).

I understand that any identifiable information in regards to my name **will not** be listed this in the dissertation or any future publication(s). Each individual will be referenced by using a Greek letter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Assigned Designation Letter: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**  
**ORIENTATION PACKET**



## CLERGY WELLNESS AND THE CONGREGATION A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP

### ORIENTATION FORM

#### Purpose

The purpose of this form is to introduce the project and prepare the participating church members by presenting a total overview of the project, its mission, and goals.

#### United Theological Seminary

##### The Purpose of the Doctor of Ministry Degree

The Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program at United Theological Seminary (UTS) is an advanced professional degree program in the practice of ministry. In this program, religious leaders guide the development of new models of ministry in which both ministers and ministry contexts are transformed. The program's Action Research Methods foster spiritual and intellectual synthesis while strengthening prophetic and pastoral competence.

In this contextual mode of learning, each student engages in a collaborative approach to self-directed learning and critical reflection through participation in a Peer Group, guided by a Faculty Mentor. After studying the context of ministry and its ministry needs, each participant works with persons from the ministry context, peers, the Faculty Mentor and professional associates to design a replicable model of ministry to address a specific need within the context. All projects must be action oriented with the objective of producing measurable change within the ministry context.

The student spends five days each semester on the UTS campus and two sessions, 32 contact hours each semester, with the Peer Group. The program utilizes distance education to maximize communications and to minimize the need for travel.

#### What to Expect

- A pre-survey at the beginning of the first session.
- A post-survey at the end of the sixth session.
- A total of six sessions lasting approximately 1 to 1½ hours.
  - Session will be partial lecture and partial open discussion
  - Session will be dynamic—allowing Rev. Gramza to adjust as necessary.
- Gratitude from Pastor Jeff.
- A stronger and healthier congregation.

**APPENDIX E**  
**PRE/POST SURVEYS**

### Pre Test

1. How much of a sense of belonging do you have at church?
  - ☐ No belonging at all
  - ☐ A little bit of belonging
  - ☐ Some belonging
  - ☐ Quite a bit of belonging
  - ☐ A tremendous amount of belonging
2. How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about your needs?
  - ☐ Extremely safe
  - ☐ Very safe
  - ☐ Moderately safe
  - ☐ Slightly safe
  - ☐ Not at all safe
3. How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs?
  - ☐ Extremely safe
  - ☐ Very safe
  - ☐ Moderately safe
  - ☐ Slightly safe
  - ☐ Not at all safe
4. Who is responsible for the pastor's health and well-being? Check all that apply.
  - ☐ Pastor
  - ☐ Bishop
  - ☐ Pastor's family
  - ☐ Congregation
  - ☐ Me
5. How should the pastor prioritize his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's self
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's family
  - \_\_\_ Church needs
  - \_\_\_ God
  - \_\_\_ Community
6. How do the church's members wish the pastor prioritized his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's self
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's family
  - \_\_\_ Church needs
  - \_\_\_ God
  - \_\_\_ Community

7. How realistic are the church's expectations of what a pastor can accomplish in a week?
  - ☐ Extremely realistic
  - ☐ Very realistic
  - ☐ Moderately realistic
  - ☐ Slightly realistic
  - ☐ Not at all realistic
8. How many hours do you think your pastor works in a week?
  - ☐ 30-40 hours
  - ☐ 40-50 hours
  - ☐ 50-60 hours
  - ☐ 60-75 hours
  - ☐ 75-100 hours
9. When the pastor came to our church, he promised to love and support us?
  - ☐ True
  - ☐ False
10. When the pastor came to our church, we promised to love and support him?
  - ☐ True
  - ☐ False

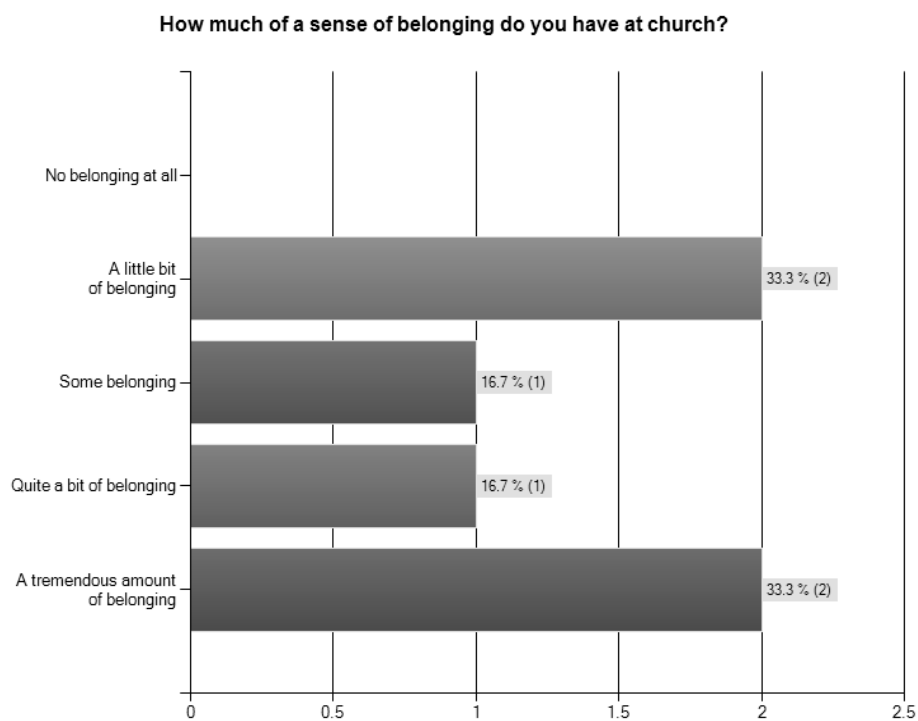
### Post Test

1. How much of a sense of belonging do you have at church?
  - ☐ No belonging at all
  - ☐ A little bit of belonging
  - ☐ Some belonging
  - ☐ Quite a bit of belonging
  - ☐ A tremendous amount of belonging
2. How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about your needs?
  - ☐ Extremely safe
  - ☐ Very safe
  - ☐ Moderately safe
  - ☐ Slightly safe
  - ☐ Not at all safe
3. How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs?
  - ☐ Extremely safe
  - ☐ Very safe
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  - ☐ Slightly safe
  - ☐ Not at all safe
4. Who is responsible for the pastor's health and well-being? Check all that apply.
  - ☐ Pastor
  - ☐ Bishop
  - ☐ Pastor's family
  - ☐ Congregation
  - ☐ Me
5. How should the pastor prioritize his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's self
  - \_\_\_ Pastor's family
  - \_\_\_ Church needs
  - \_\_\_ God
  - \_\_\_ Community
6. How do the church's members wish the pastor prioritized his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?
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  - \_\_\_ Pastor's family
  - \_\_\_ Church needs
  - \_\_\_ God
  - \_\_\_ Community

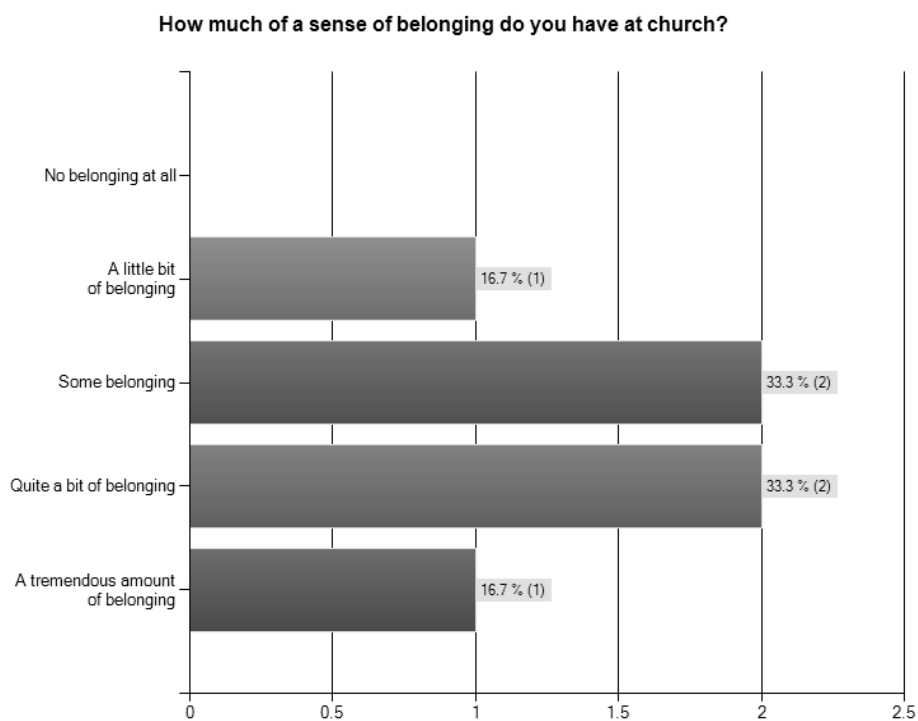
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8. How many hours do you think your pastor works in a week?
  - ☐ 30-40 hours
  - ☐ 40-50 hours
  - ☐ 50-60 hours
  - ☐ 60-75 hours
  - ☐ 75-100 hours
9. When the pastor came to our church, he promised to love and support us?
  - ☐ True
  - ☐ False
10. When the pastor came to our church, we promised to love and support him?
  - ☐ True
  - ☐ False

**APPENDIX F**  
**PRE-TEST/POST-TEST SURVEY RESULTS**

## Pre-test responses:

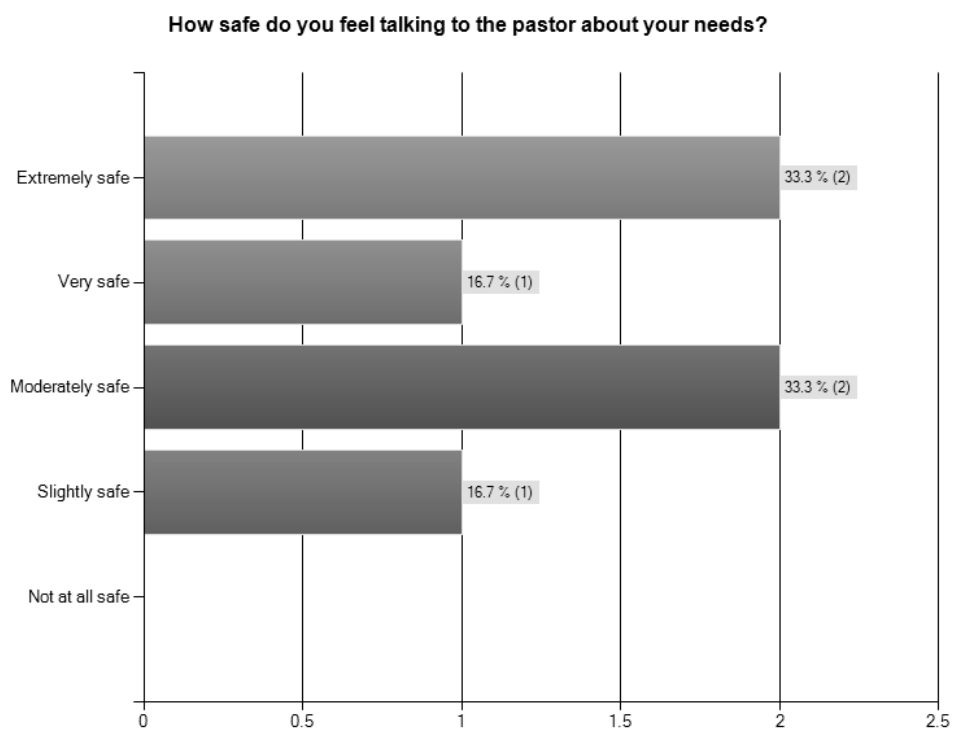


## Post-test responses

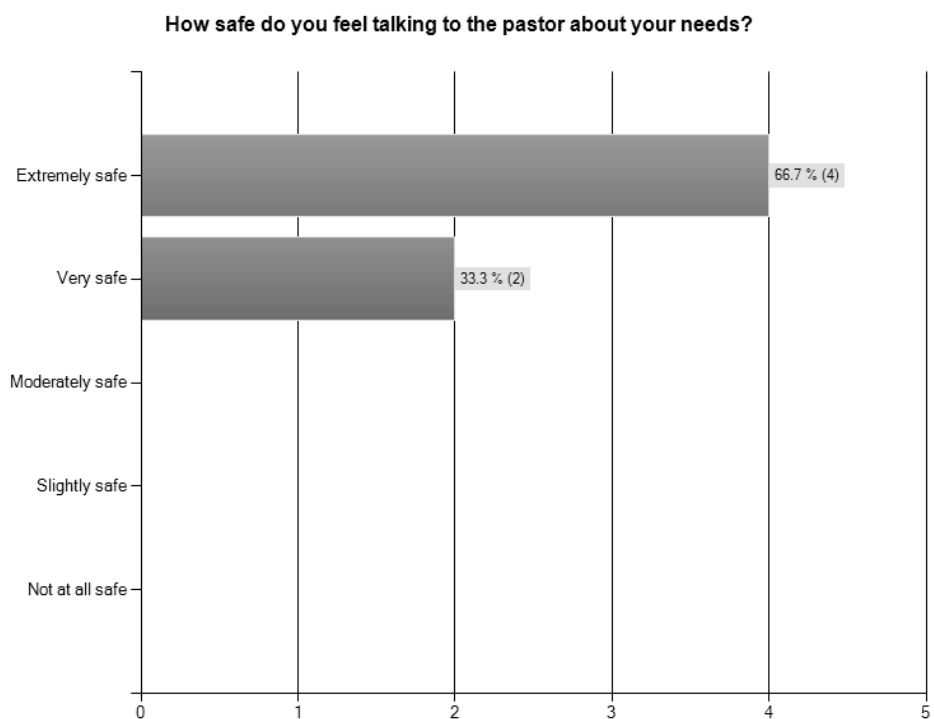




### Pre-test responses:

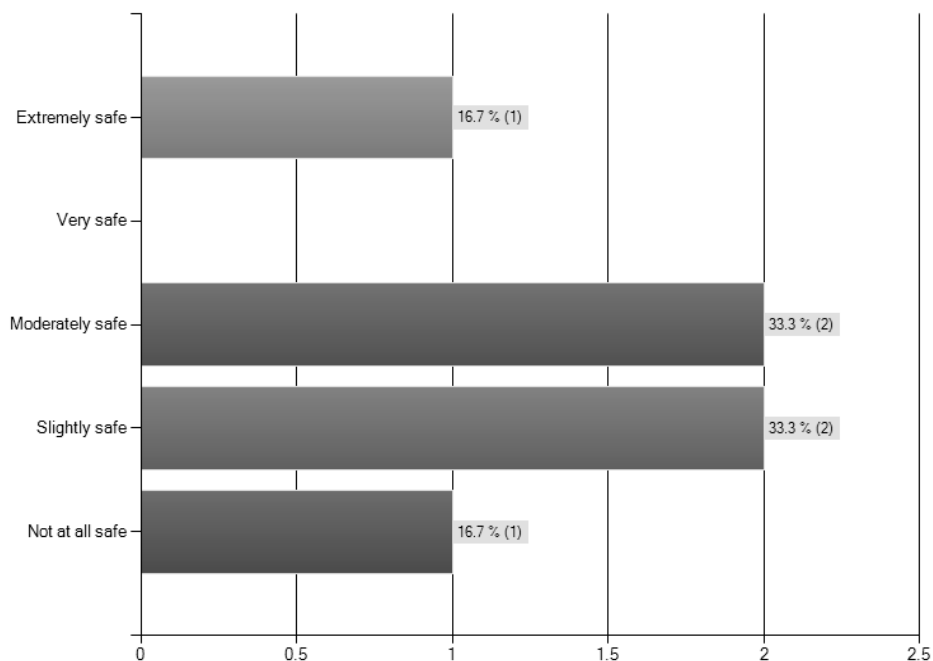


### Post-test responses



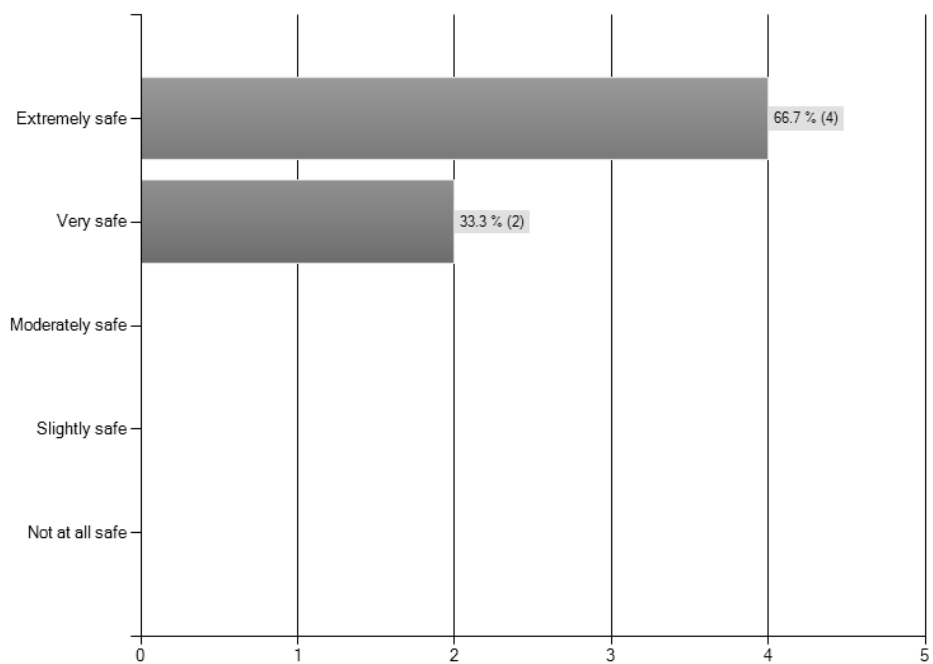
## Pre-test responses:

How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs?



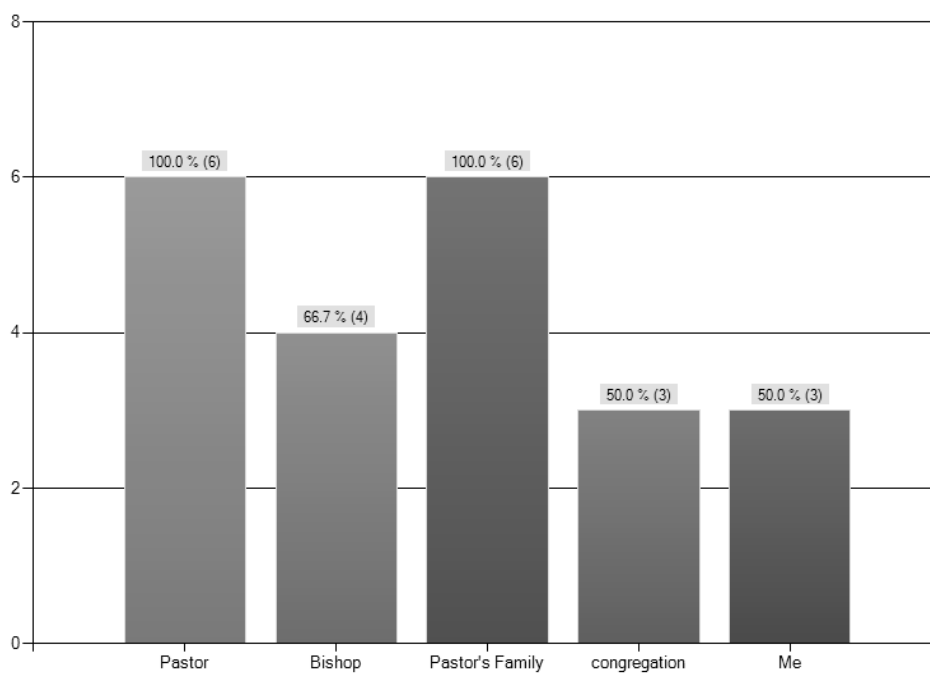
## Post-test responses

How safe do you feel talking to the pastor about the pastor's needs?



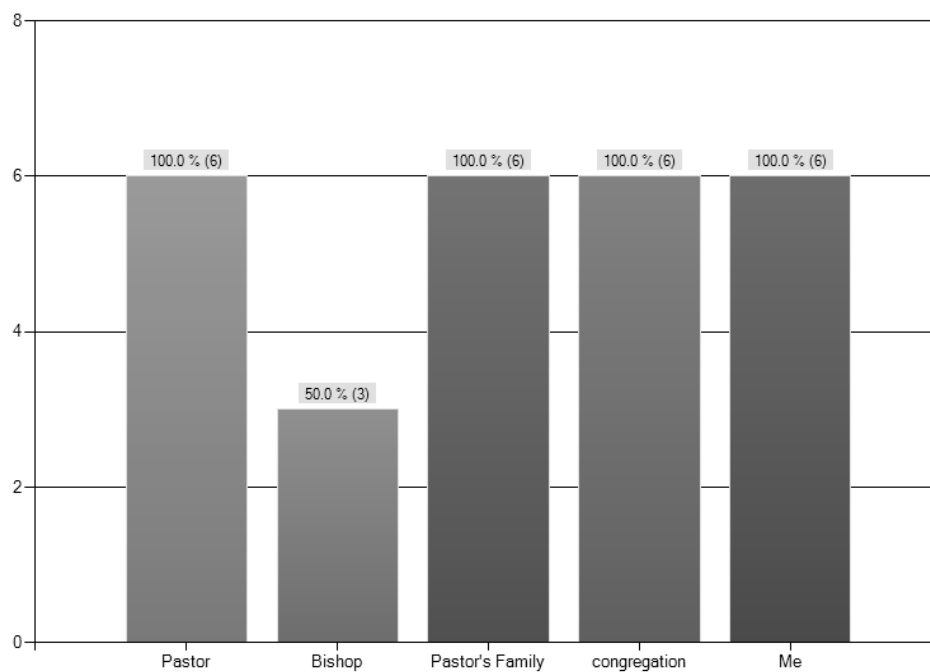
### Pre-test responses:

Who is responsible for the pastor's health and well-being? Check all that apply.



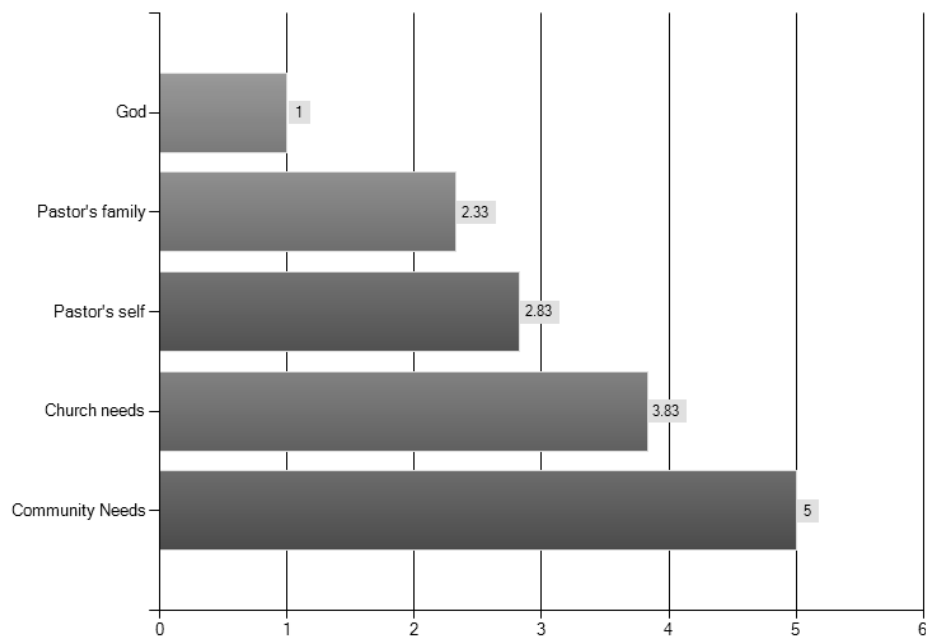
### Post-test responses:

Who is responsible for the pastor's health and well-being? Check all that apply.



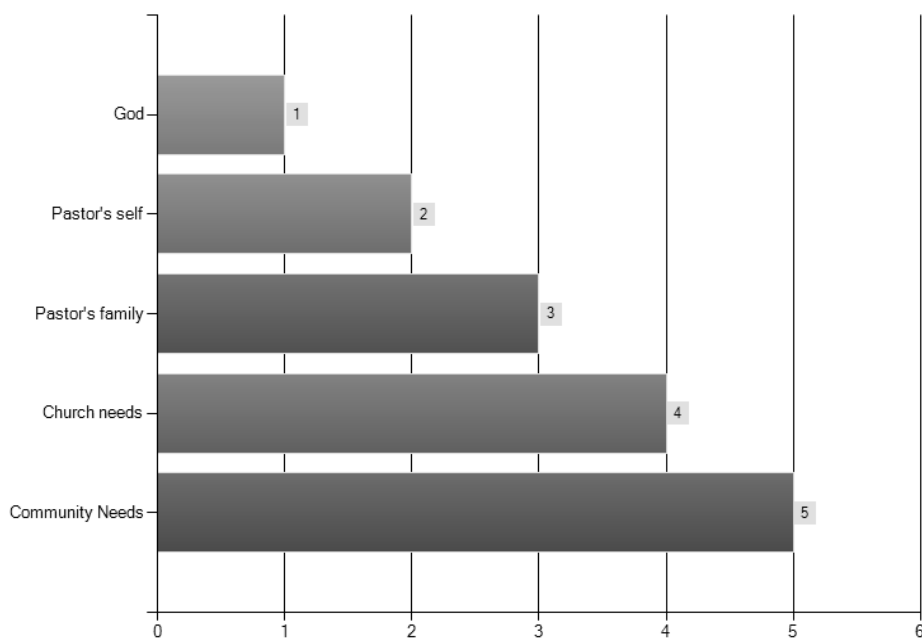
### Pre-test responses:

How should the pastor prioritize his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?



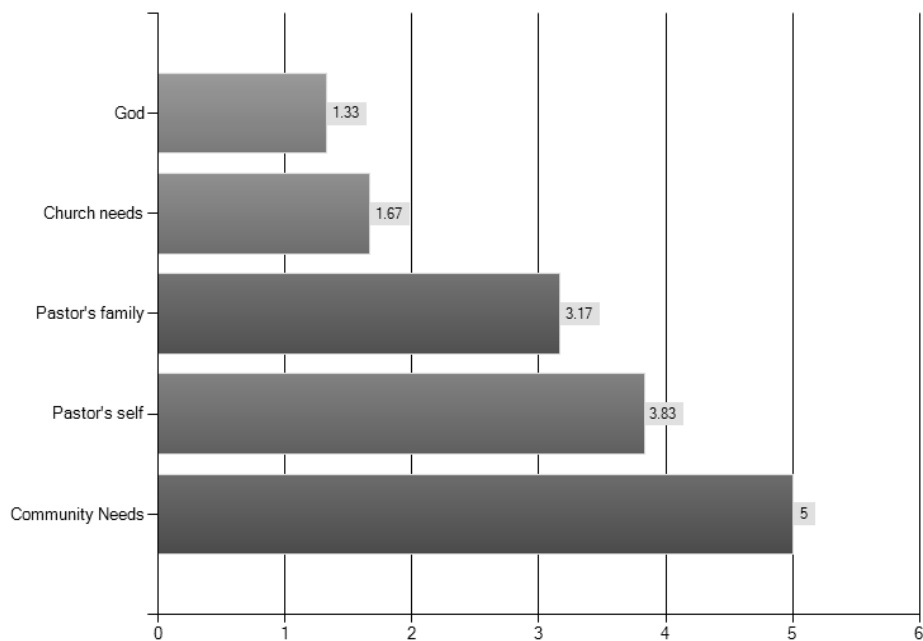
### Post-test responses

How should the pastor prioritize his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?



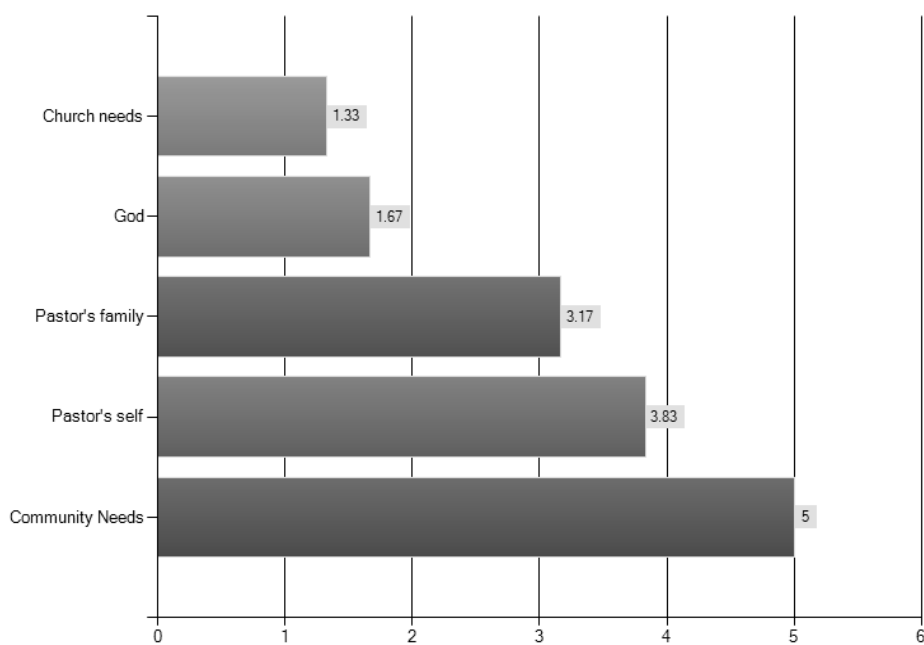
### Pre-test responses:

How do the church members wish the pastor prioritized his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?



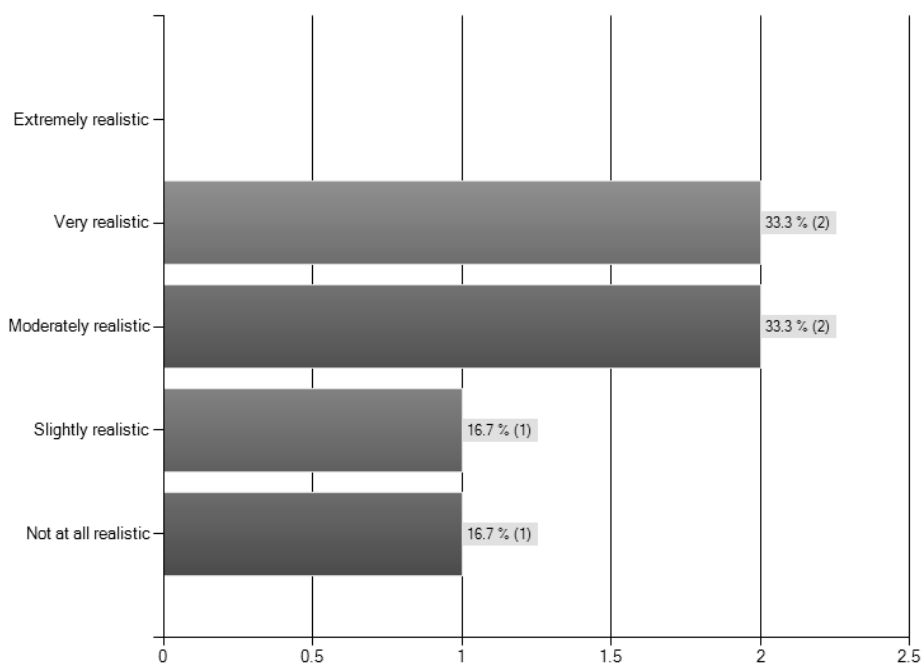
### Post-test responses

How do the church members wish the pastor prioritized his life? Rank the following from most important to least important?



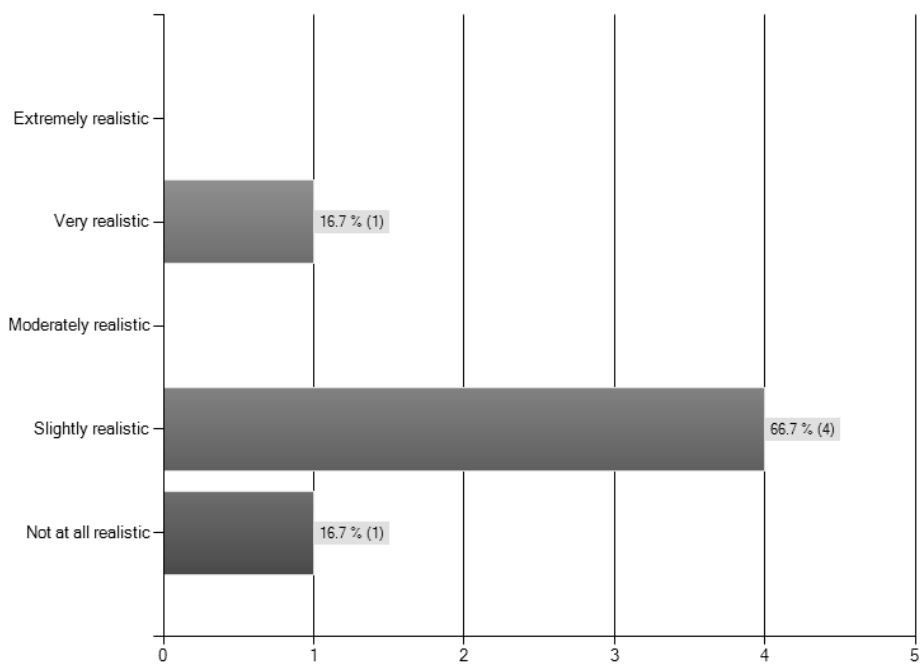
### Pre-test responses:

How realistic are the church expectations of what a pastor can accomplish in a week?



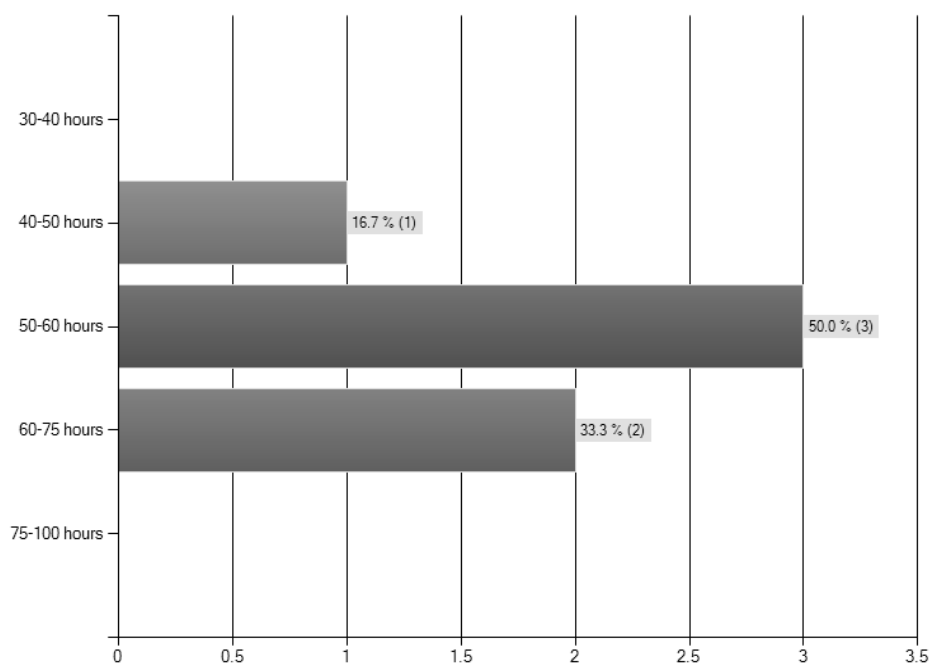
### Post-test responses:

How realistic are the church expectations of what a pastor can accomplish in a week?



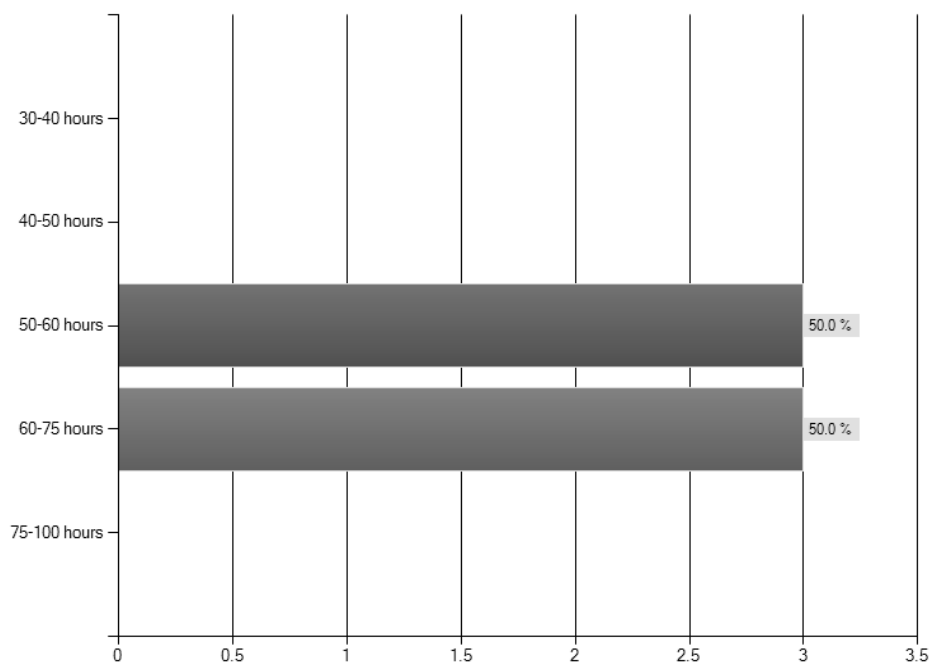
### Pre-test responses:

How many hours do you think your pastor works in a week?



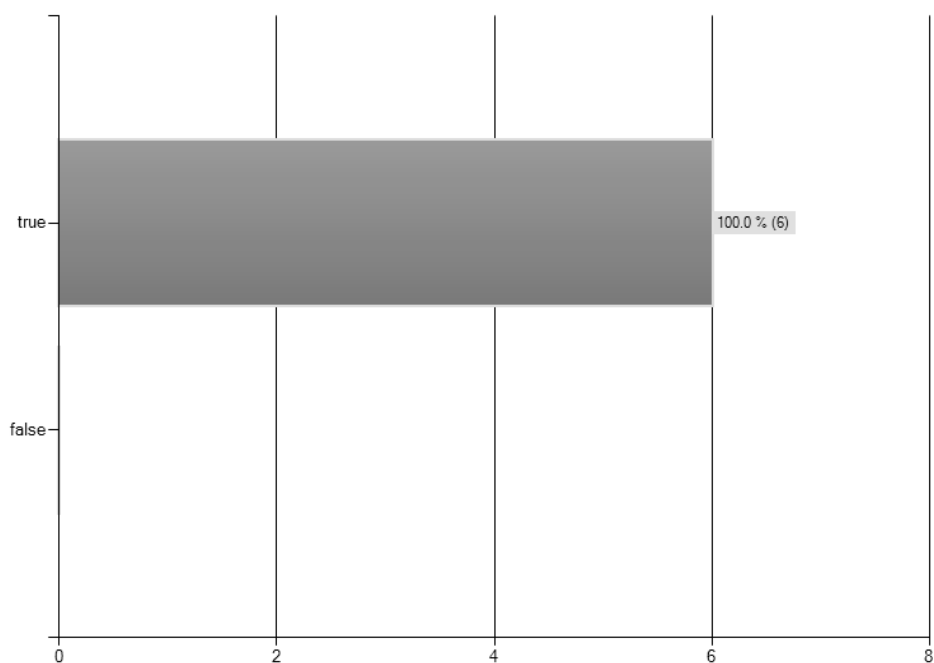
### Post-test responses:

How many hours do you think your pastor works in a week?



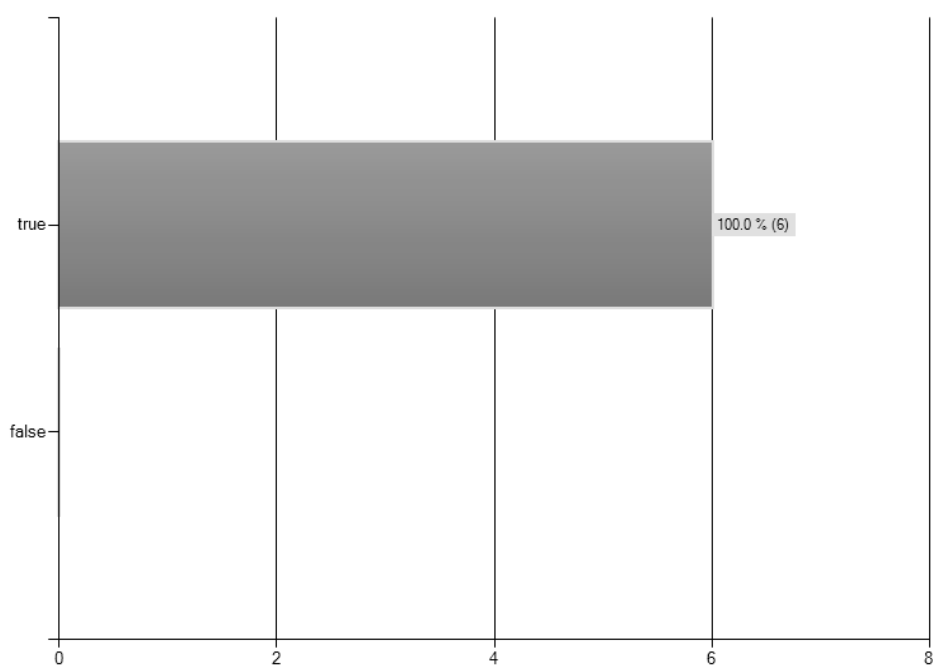
## Pre-test responses:

When the pastor came to our church, he promised to love and support us?



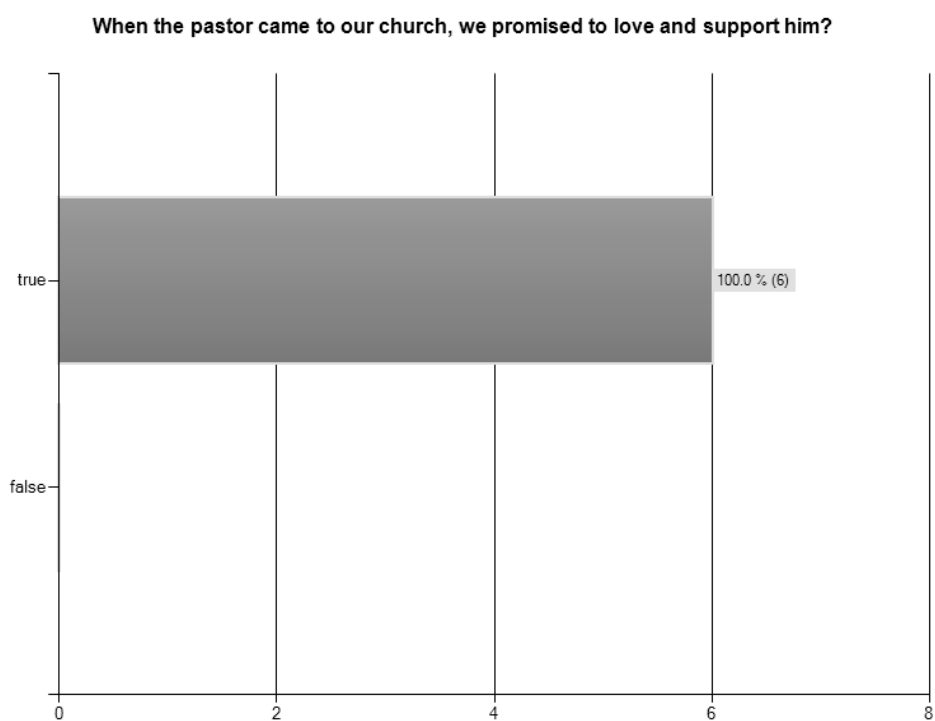
## Post-test responses

When the pastor came to our church, he promised to love and support us?

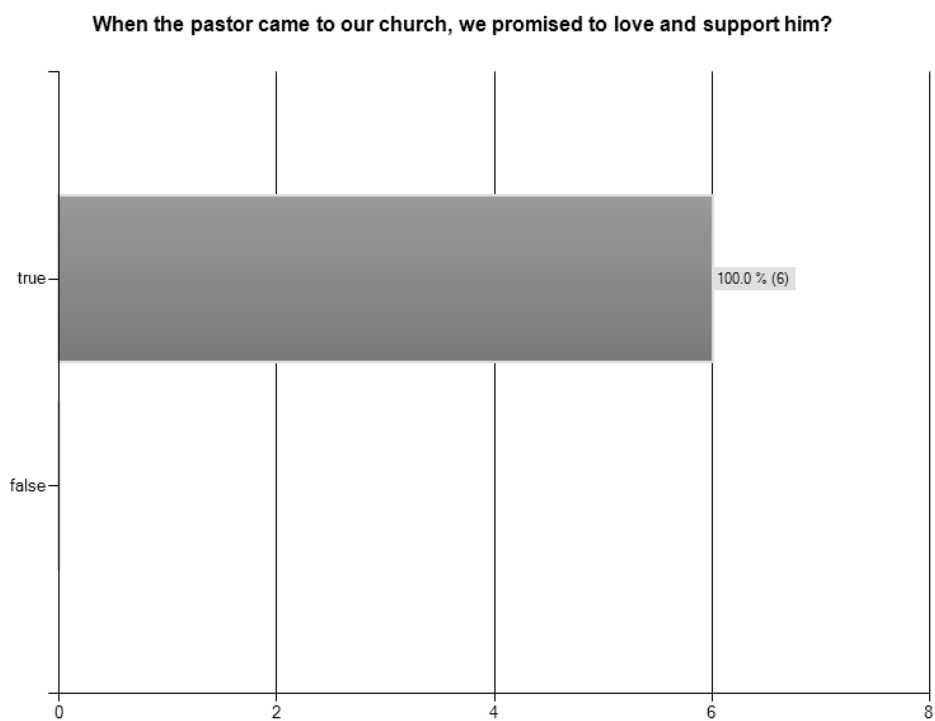




### Pre-test responses:



### Post-test responses



**APPENDIX G**  
**TABLES**

The following tables are taken from the Ministerial Health and Wellness report of 2002 from the ELCA (the report and tables within focus on rostered<sup>1</sup> leaders.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1**

**Health Issues Reported by ELCA Rostered Clergy**

<b>Health Issues</b>	<b>U.S. Population</b>	<b>ELCA Clergy</b>
Overweight	61%	68%
Obese (based on BMI)	22.5%	34%
No physical exercise	40%	22%
Hypertension	23%	22%
Diabetes	7%	6%
Cholesterol >200 (>240)	29% (18.9%)	28% (4%)
Clinical Depression	9.5%	17%

**Table 2**

**Spiritual/Vocational Issues Reported by ELCA Rostered Clergy**

<b>Spiritual/Vocational Issues</b>	<b>ELCA Clergy</b>	<b>Clergy of Color</b>	<b>Clergy Male</b>	<b>Clergy female</b>
Dissatisfied with personal devotional life.	20%	11%	18%	23%
Commitment to present calling not strong	4%	3%	4%	4%
Don't plan to remain in vocation until retirement	7%	6%	6%	8%
Dissatisfied with present vocational situation.	9%	7%	8%	13%

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<sup>1</sup> Rostered leaders are ordained clergy, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry who have been professionally trained, are ordained or consecrates, and are in good standing in the ELCA. Rostered Clergy are only ordained pastors.

<sup>2</sup> Wagstrom, 42-49.

**Table 3****Lifestyle Behaviors Reported by ELCA Rostered Clergy**

<b>Lifestyle Behaviors</b>	<b>ELCA Clergy</b>	<b>Clergy of Color</b>	<b>Clergy Male</b>	<b>Clergy Female</b>
Smoke	6%	7%	7%	3%
Binge Drinking (>5 drinks in one sitting in past 6 months)	4.4%	3.3%	5.5%	1%
No Exercise (in 6 months)	22%	27%	21%	26%
>5 servings of fruit/veg per day.	20%	16%	18%	26%
>4 servings of fat per day	8%	6%	8%	8%
Physical Exam in past year	67%	75%	65%	76%
Seatbelt-always	78%	82%	77%	84%

**Table 4****Readiness to Change Behaviors Reported by ELCA Rostered Clergy**

<b>Readiness to Change</b>	<b>ELCA Clergy</b>	<b>Clergy of Color</b>	<b>Clergy Male</b>	<b>Clergy Female</b>
Behaviors to Improve Health	78%	77%	79%	78%
Lose weight	64%	62%	62%	71%
Increase Exercise	64%	66%	62%	74%
Reduce fat	53%	54%	52%	59%
Stress Management	42%	57%	38%	55%
Reduce alcohol intake	7%	9%	6%	8%
Quit tobacco	6%	7%	7%	3%

**Table 5**  
**Stresses Reported by ELCA Rostered Clergy\***

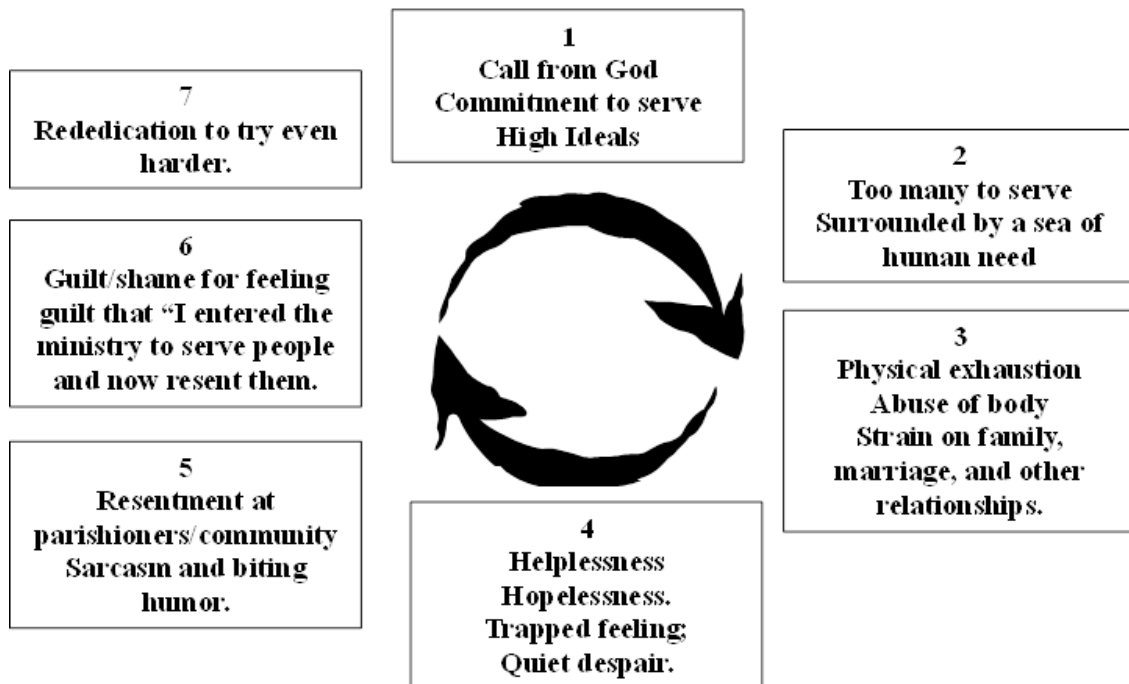
<b>Stresses</b>	<b>ELCA Clergy</b>	<b>Clergy of Color</b>	<b>Clergy Male</b>	<b>Clergy Female</b>
Job dissatisfaction	7%	7%	7%	9%
Life dissatisfaction	4%	3%	4%	5%
Divorce	2%	0%	2%	3%
Job loss	4%	4%	3%	6%
Violence	1%	2%	1%	1%
Financial Problems	18%	23%	15%	25%
Problems with family	16%	12%	24%	24%
Problems with friends	23%	22%	21%	30%
Moving	13%	12%	12%	20%
General stress	51%	48%	49%	59%
Job stress	56%	53%	53%	64%
Job problems	17%	16%	15%	22%
Health problems	15%	14%	14%	20%

\* These questions were phrased “In the past year have you had serious problems with...”

**APPENDIX H**  
**BURNOUT CYCLE**

This diagram comes from Roy Oswald's *Clergy Self-Care*<sup>1</sup>

## Burnout Cycle



<sup>1</sup> Oswald, *Clergy Self Care*.

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